THE EXEMPLARY MOTHER:

OR,

LETTERS

BETWEEN

Mrs. VILLARS and her FAMILY.

Publiſhed by a LADY,

From the ORIGINALS in her Poſſeſſion.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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ADVERTISEMENT TO THE READER.

IF, in an Age when the moſt unnatural Characters and the moſt improbable Adventures are continually circulated and eagerly ſought after, the following Work (containing the Exhibition of a genuine Character in the common Occurrences of *real* Life) can engage Attention,—it cannot fail of affording a rational Amuſement, of improving the Underſtanding by the Juſtneſs of its Obſervations, of correcting Vice by the Goodneſs of its Precepts, and of ſtrengthening Virtue by the Amiableneſs of its Examples.

THE EXEMPLARY MOTHER.

LETTER I.

LADY EGERTON to Mrs. GRIFFIN.

DEAR MADAM,

MY long silence has perhaps made you give up all expectation of receiving another letter from me, yet it has been occasioned neither by forgetfulness, nor ingratitude; illness first prevented me from returning an answer to your letter, and an unexpected ramble has since protracted the delay.

I am now at G*** in Essex, at the house of Mrs. Villars a widow lady. To

this amiable woman I am indebted for my life: ſhe and her daughter lodged in the ſame houſe with me, and though I had many acquaintance at the Bath, I found there no true friend except Mrs. Villars. As ſhe ſhared in few of the public diverſions, I enjoyed her converſation every day; which ſo much heightened my eſteem and friendſhip for her, that when ſhe acquainted me ſoon after my recovery with the neceſſity of her return home, I could not forbear ſhedding tears. But with a tender eagerneſs ſhe requeſted that I would give her my company into Eſſex.

My daughter's indiſcreet marriage rendered Northamptonſhire diſagreeable; I had not acquired ſufficient reſolution to reviſit that place. I knew the ſight of it would increaſe my reſentment, and unavailing regret.—On the other hand, Mrs. Villars, on our firſt acquaintance, attracted my affections. Her aſſiduous tenderneſs

during my illneſs, her tender ſolicitude for the happineſs of her children, and the noble ſentiments ſhe diſplayed upon every occaſion, ſo much heightened my love and eſteem, that I was incapable of denying myſelf a longer enjoyment of her ſociety, and a nearer intimacy with her virtues.

We therefore left Bath together; I accompanied her to Oxford, where her ſon is a ſtudent, from whence we came directly to G***. This place is extremely delightful, but perhaps owes its chief beauty to its inhabitants. Mrs Villars is about forty years of age, yet does not appear to be more than thirty. Her eaſy unaffected chearfulneſs has contributed to preſerve in her the bloom of youth. She is indeed very handſome, but her features glow with ſuch benignity, that my contemplation is withdrawn from admiration of her perſon to thoſe beauties of the mind, which will ever ſupply the

undecaying charm of ſweetneſs to her external form. For piety and extenſive benevolence, for maternal love and domeſtic attentions, I never knew her equal. She has told me, that the education of her children, has been her moſt delightful taſk. I have endeavoured, ſaid ſhe, to make them truly good; they are not, nor do I wiſh them to be heirs of earthly grandeur; I would inſpire them with a nobler ambition, to become inheritors of an heavenly kingdom. She was, it ſeems, perfectly happy with Mr. Villars, to whom ſhe was married at the age of nineteen. He lived with her only ſix years. I am certain, from her declining to anſwer my queſtions of that nature, and from her uncommon merit, that ſhe has had many offers; but I find ſhe never intends to marry again. Her circumſtances are very eaſy, but not affluent. Her ſervants regard her as a parent, rather than a miſtreſs;

and indeed her unremitted endeavours for their inſtruction in every duty and neceſſary employment, and the tenderneſs of her behaviour to them, are truly maternal. —Was I to expatiate on every virtue ſhe practiſes, I ſhould extend this beyond the proper bounds of a letter.

Miſs Villars is almoſt ſeventeen. Her features are regular and delicate. If ſhe is not ſo fine a woman as Mrs. Villars, her form perhaps is more genteel. Her mind is a copy of her amiable mother's, and her looks are expreſſive of as much ſweetneſs; but ſhe ſeems to want that ſteadineſs of ſoul which ſupports Mrs. Villars on every occaſion. If Miſs Villars ſhould place her affections on a deſigning hypocrite, ſhe will be, from the extreme ſoftneſs of her diſpoſition, the moſt miſerable of her ſex. She has nothing of that ſupercilious manner, which occaſions many young ladies to be diſliked

by their domeſtics. She ſpeaks to them in the gentleſt tone, uſes the mildeſt expreſſions, and their ſervices are animated by real love. So far is Miſs Villars from ſporting with the pain of the moſt inſignificant being, that I have ſeen her as ſedulous in the endeavour to releaſe an inſect from the rude graſp of a child, as too many perſons are in the deſtruction of the moſt noble creatures. She has learned from her mother, that ſhe ſhall be accountable for the infliction of pain on any creature, and that ſhe owes a tenderneſs to all, even the meaneſt of the living ſpecies.

I own to you, Mrs. Griffin, I was aſtoniſhed at theſe ſentiments; but on a little conſideration and a conſtant attention to every inſtance of Mrs. Villars's conduct, I bluſhed at my inferiority, and felt the truth of her obſervations.

Mr-

Mr. Villars has attained the age of twenty. He is tall and genteel, is handſome without pride or affectation, has a refined underſtanding without pedantry, and wit without the leaſt tincture of ill-nature: his eye is penetrating yet lively, and his converſation entertaining beyond deſcription. He is compaſſionate without that extreme ſoftneſs which is conſpicuous in his ſiſter.

Mr. Villars's gaiety may betray him into imprudencies; but if Miſs Villars ſwerve from duty, *love* will moſt probably be the ſource of her errors. But I hope ſuch a mother's example and inſtruction will ſecure both from deviation.

It is time to conclude my firſt letter; I give you the promiſe of another very ſoon.

I am, my dear Mrs. Griffin,

Your ſincerely affectionate,

E. EGERTON.

LETTER II.

Lady EGERTON to Mrs. GRIFFIN.

DEAR MADAM,

THOUGH in my laſt I gave you ſome ſketch of Mrs. Villars's character, I muſt in this ſend you a further account of her ſentiments and manner of life.

The following is a journal of her daily employment. She riſes at ſix, reads prayers at ſeven, when all the ſervants are preſent and edified by her example. Family affairs are ſettled before breakfaſt, and theſe are always tranſacted without buſtle or hurry. I never in my life ſaw ſo much order and decorum preſerved, as in this houſe. Her mornings are ſometimes dedicated to writing, ſometimes to work, while Miſs Villars reads aloud; at others, Mrs. Villars takes up a book when her daughter

daughter is engaged with her needle. At one, they dreſs, and dine at two. After dinner, Miſs Villars plays on her harpſichord, and ſings. Their afternoons are ſometimes paſſed in viſits to the neighbouring families, but more frequently at home, where Miſs Villars either enjoys her mother's delightful and inſtructive converſation, or hears her read and make obſervations. After tea, they walk their rounds to their poor neighbours, whoſe ſickneſs is relieved by Mrs. Villars's lenient aſſiſtance, and their misfortunes are either redreſſed by her timely benevolence, or their afflictions ſoothed by religious conſolations. She exhorts their families to the performance of the duties ſhe has taught them, and entitles herſelf to the bleſſings of every grateful heart. She is their earthly benefactreſs, and becomes their guide to immortality.

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The ladies ſup at nine, and afterwards either play on the harpſichord, or amuſe themſelves in the garden; about eleven, the family again aſſembles at prayers, and then retire to bed.

I aſked Mrs. Villars if her ſon liked the country, and if he was not ſoon tired of ſo methodical a life. When he is with us, anſwered ſhe, we viſit more than uſual, and he frequently rides with his ſiſter, of whom he is very fond; tho' he ſometimes ſays ſhe is too grave, and is fearful ſhe is dearer to me than he is; but I aſſure you, madam, this is not the caſe, for they are both dutiful children. My daughter's diſpoſition is moſt conformable to mine; but as my ſon's gaiety is (I flatter myſelf) confined within the limits of his duty, I am happy in ſeeing him chearful, and endeavour to contribute to his amuſement. He loves poetry, and even writes it agreeably. I ſometimes attempt a rhyme, and he is

pleaſed

pleaſed with my productions. Sometimes I compoſe a tale, the moral of which tends to inculcate religion and virtue. Thus I try to obtain my children's regard by rendering myſelf agreeable to them; for I would have them love me as a friend, whilſt they reſpect me as a parent. I conſider my ſon as the living repreſentative of his dear father, and I hope he will inherit all my huſband's virtues.

Laſt Sunday after church I deſired Miſs Villars to read to me, and put a volume of Tom Jones into her hand. She bluſhed, heſitated, but at laſt begged I would chuſe ſome book more proper for the day, from her mother's library. I was rather aſhamed of being tutored by a girl, but willing to hear her reaſons: Surely, my dear Flavia, ſaid I, you are too ſcrupulous; we have been twice at church, and you would not pore over ſermons till bed time. It would be arrogance in me, madam, anſwered ſhe,

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and doing injuſtice to my mother, to aſcribe any merit to myſelf in the allotment of my time. Obedience to her is my glory, for I am convinced I act right, when I perform her gentle injunctions. She has often told me it is not mere attendance on the ſervice of the church, nor the turning over the pages of a religious author, that conſtitute a right performance of our duty on the Lord's Day. We muſt add meditation on the mercies of God, to preſerve a lively and effectual gratitude. Can we, ſhe ſays, refuſe to allot one day in ſeven to thankſgiving and religious contemplation, when the only important buſineſs of our lives ought to be to render ourſelves acceptable to the Deity? We require leſs to be inſtructed in the *knowledge* of our duty, than to be influenced to the *practice* of it, and religious obſervances are the only ſecurity for our performance of moral virtues. Example, ſhe adds, is prevalent, and we may by our indulgence

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of an amuſement innocent in its own nature, but unſeaſonably performed, endanger the virtue of thoſe about us.

I thanked Miſs Villars for her confidence in me, and acknowledged the juſtneſs of the obſervation: But, ſaid I, ſervants and labourers, who have only Sundays for days of recreation, will not be confined from ſports and feſtivity. My mother is convinced of it, madam, ſhe anſwered, and never refuſes her ſervants any innocent relaxation after they have been at church. Sometimes they walk in the gardens, at others ſhe gives them an entertainment of fruits, cyder, &c. or performs hymns and anthems on her organ, I play on my harpſichord, and we both ſing. Theſe concerts give them much pleaſure. My mother encourages them to ſing pſalms, and to converſe on chearful and inſtructive ſubjects, rewards their ſobriety, and expreſſes her diſlike to any irregularity. Thoſe who *cannot* read, often intreat one of us

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to read a chapter in the Bible or a ſermon; and thoſe who *can*, apply to my mother for the ſubject of their peruſal, who recommends, and even promotes by her example, a decent chearfulneſs.

Yeſterday I aſked my amiable friend if ſhe had permitted her children an early peruſal of novels. Perhaps, ſaid ſhe, your ladyſhip will blame me when I tell you, that whilſt they were very young, I ſelected ſome of the beſt novels, and laid them in the room where we uſually ſat. I did not recommend them particularly to their notice, for I had ſome volumes of biography, hiſtory, and poetry, mixed with them; I wiſhed to inſpire in them a love of reading, and to remark the propenſity of each diſpoſition. Frederick made choice of Fielding's works, which he read with eagerneſs. Flavia was charmed with the pathetic Richardſon. My ſon was attached only to works of humour, my daughter

daughter preferred the tender to the ridiculous. When they had perused the books I procured, I desired them to read with greater attention, to write down the sentiments they most approved, the repartees and witticisms with which they were most delighted, and to make their own observations on the story, sentiments and characters. I did not enjoin this as a task, but advised it as a method I had myself found useful; for the remembrance of mere story (I told them) was the pleasure of a child, but the recollection of sentimental truth, formed a mature judgement. I sometimes advised them to dress in their own language any story they had perused. I encouraged their progress by my applauses of their docility and readiness, and they soon acquired by this practice, an accuracy of expression, and an acuteness in judging. In respect to novel writing I taught them, that the design of that species of composition ought

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to be, to unite utility with entertainment. That the characters ſhould not be drawn beyond the limits of probability, yet ſhould be calculated to render the reader better by the exhibition of virtuous examples. That vice ſhould always diſguſt by its deformity, and that whilſt we condemn faults in the portraits preſented to our view, we ſhould turn the mirror on ourſelves, and behold with deteſtation, errors equally indefenſible.

I told them that biography was *leſs* beneficial, becauſe there are few real characters *wholly* worthy of imitation. That virtues and vices are in general ſo blended, that the latter are palliated by the former.

But, madam, ſaid I, could you reſtrain your children from the peruſal of any book you diſliked? I gave them, anſwered ſhe, ſuch evident proofs that I ſought only their inſtruction and amuſement, that neither

of

of them ever acted in oppoſition to my deſires. Indeed, I had endeavoured to enable them to judge what were the proper motives of choice and rejection.

I can't imagine, reſumed I, how you acquired ſuch an empire over their inclinations. Did you never humour them when young? Never find them refractory ſince they attained a more turbulent age?

I will give you, ſaid ſhe, an account of my methods. I was able to be the nurſe of both my children. A delightful taſk! and, where the mother is capable, an act of duty. In their infancy I diverted them from any purſuits which might injure their health, or nouriſh the ſeeds of any dangerous propenſity. I neither ſuffered them to be rendered unneceſſarily uneaſy, nor to pleaſe themſelves by tormenting the meaneſt living creature; for unreaſonable contradiction excites fretfulneſs, and deſtroys the power of chearfulneſs; and improper in-

dulgencies cultivate an inclination to cruelty, by eradicating that tenderneſs which makes us ſuffer on ſeeing any object in pain. In ſhort, madam, I made *my* reaſon the *rule* of my children's actions whilſt they were young, and when they were elder, I taught them to exert *their own*.

I ſtrenuouſly inculcated benevolence of diſpoſition, and have frequently felt the ſatisfaction of ſeeing them aſſiſt objects of charity with thoſe ſums they had intended to appropriate to the decoration of their perſons.

We live in perfect harmony. The tenderneſs of the friend ſubſiſts with the authority of the parent, and the moſt affectionate regard animates the obedience of the children. I believe they never indulged a thought they wiſhed to conceal from me, and I have never deſired to know their ſentiments, but with the hope of contributing to their improvement. Their different

ferent diſpoſitions required ſome difference of treatment: my daughter's diffidence was relieved by my encouragement; my ſon's vivacity might have degenerated into folly and diſobedience, if it had not been confined within proper reſtrictions.

I have yet had no reaſons to ſuſpect my ſon of any irregularity. He has the advantage of a tutor whoſe conduct is exemplary, and I hope he will imitate Mr. Spencer. But I dare not expect he will be impeccable. Should he ſwerve, he ſhall never accuſe me of ſeverity; and I flatter myſelf the natural goodneſs of his heart, and his confidence in my tenderneſs will preſerve him from incorrigible errors.

Every conference with Mrs. Villars heightens my eſteem and love. I ſhall never want a ſubject for my letters while I am with her. Believe me to be,

Dear Mrs. Griffin,

Your faithful and affectionate

E. EGERTON.

P. S. Miſs Villars has imparted to me a letter from her mother to her brother on his going to college. I begged a copy of it, which I incloſe. I cannot add any thing worth detaining you from the peruſal of it.

LETTER III.

Mrs. VILLARS to Mr. VILLARS.

MY DEAR SON,

YOU are now entering on a ſituation the more hazardous becauſe you are inſenſible of its dangers, and too fruitful of intoxicating pleaſure, to awaken a ſuſpicion of impending miſery.

I feel a laudable exultation of heart on the reflection that you have hitherto perſevered in the practice of the duties of life. But, my dear ſon, remember, that you have yet been unaſſailed by temptations, and never been removed from the watchful eye of a tender parent. The duties which have pre-

preſerved to you an happy ſerenity of mind, will afford perhaps to your gay companions a ſubject on which to diſplay their talents for ridicule. I tremble when I conſider, that you may be aſſaulted by all the deſtructive arguments of ſophiſtry, expoſed to the fallacious allurements of pleaſure, and invited to plunge into the gulph of ſenſuality!

Oh! my child, do not forget in the midſt of a gay, licentious world, that you have obligations which no human power can ever cancel, and duties to fulfil, from which you can never be diſengaged!

Mr. Spencer has undertaken to be your monitor, and inſtructor. You know his character, and my confidence in his underſtanding and integrity: to him therefore I intreat that you will apply for advice in any immediate exigence, and be guided by his prudent and friendly admonitions.

I will not too ſeverely taſk your obliging and dutiful diſpoſition, but it will give me very great ſatisfaction, if you are punctual in writing to me once a fortnight. Never ſtudy for expreſſions. Let your letters be like your heart, frank and undiſguiſed; your language be unembelliſhed with ornamental flouriſhes, and breathe only the pure ſuggeſtions of truth.

Your temper is lively, yet tender; you are naturally friendly and unſuſpecting: beware leſt you be ſeduced to a miſapplication of intended bleſſings. Never ſuffer your gaiety to betray you into licentiouſneſs, nor the tenderneſs of your heart to deviate into a neglect of true honour. Vice and imprudence are no *neceſſary* attendants on youth, though too frequently its inſeparable companions.

If you are aſſaulted by the ridicule of your gay acquaintance for perſiſting in any laudable cuſtom, deſpiſe *their* contempt,

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and be only fearful of incurring *your own*. If you would be ſecure from the arrows of calumny, be careful never to part with the ſhield of innocence. Remember you have a tender mother who is anxiouſly ſolicitous for your improvement in goodneſs, and whoſe happineſs is dependent on her children's conduct; remember you have a ſiſter to whom you are infinitely dear, and that *your honour* ought to be as pure and unblemiſhed as *her virtue*. But above all remember, that there is an Omniſcient Being, to whom you will be accountable for every deviation, whoſe diſpleaſure conſigns you to the everlaſting puniſhments of guilt, or whoſe approbation crowns you with the eternal rewards of obedience!

In your choice of friends, do not prefer the Title to the Man.

"Virtue alone is true Nobility."

Nor be deceived by the ſplendour of riches, to overlook the claim of unaſſuming

merit. If you commence an acquaintance with a perſon of ſuperior rank, never aſpire to vie with him in expence, nor ſuffer complaiſance to degenerate into vice or folly. That friendſhip alone which flows from the ſource of virtue, ſupplies an uninterrupted and inexhauſtible ſtream of delight. You have an allowance which is thought ſufficient for your ſituation and diſpoſition, and with which you appeared to be ſatisfied. Permit no artificial deſires to deprive you of the power in which you always delighted, that of relieving diſtreſs.

If, my ſon, you are betrayed into any action you condemn, endeavour rather to atone for the fault than to palliate or diſguiſe it. The regard I wiſh you ſhould always feel for me is incompatible with diſſimulation. I am no judge whoſe ſeverity would awe you into ſilence, but a friend and a parent, in whom you may repoſe an unreſerved confidence.

I hope

I hope you will purſue the manner of reading I have always recommended. Never forget, what I have often repeated to you, "that ſlow reading is the quickeſt way to knowledge." A frequent peruſal of a few well-choſen books, will tend more to the improvement of your underſtanding, than a multifarious reading of all the ſuperficial writers who have attempted to acquire literary fame.

I am not apprehenſive that you will think my advice ariſes from any other motive than a deſire of promoting your preſent and future happineſs. Be aſſured, my dear ſon, no heart can glow with more maternal fondneſs than that of

Your ever affectionate mother,
and faithful friend,
SOPHIA VILLARS.

LETTER IV.

Lady EGERTON to Mrs. GRIFFIN.

DEAR MADAM,

WHILE you read this letter you will admire Mrs. Villars and blame your friend: but after I have incurred your cenſure, I hope you will confeſs I entitle myſelf to your approbation.

Being alone with Mrs. Villars yeſterday, I put into her hand the copy of a will, which I intended to have had duly executed on my return to London, and in which I made her the heireſs of all my fortune, except ſome legacies. I alſo inſiſted on Miſs Villars's acceptance of a bank note for 100 *l.* as ſome acknowledgement for her mother's kindneſs to me, and as a proof of my gratitude, and friendſhip.

Mrs. Villars gazed on me in ſilent amazement, but I gave her the note, and deſired

desired her to lock up the will. You surprize me, madam, said she; has not your ladyship a child? I *have* a daughter, answered I; but, my dear Mrs. Villars, she has no right to expect from me the portion of a child. She married without my consent, against my express command, and into a family sunk in indigence and infamy: to a wretch whose only fortune is a red coat and sword. I threatened her with the consequences of such a choice, and she shall feel them.

You are warm, madam, replied Mrs. Villars, or you would not view this offence in so heinous a light. Will you permit me to expostulate with you? Did you encourage Miss Egerton's confidence, by treating her with the tenderness of a friend, rather than subjecting her to the harsh authority of the parent? If I have exerted any severity, interrupted I, she ought to have been sensible, it could only proceed from a desire

a deſire of her good. Has ſhe not convinced me a ſtricter conduct was neceſſary for her reſtraint? Pardon me, madam, returned Mrs. Villars, a child may ſometimes ſuſpect that a parent's ſeverity is the effect of anger rather than of love. Elſe ſurely *maternal* affection would ſuggeſt the gentleſt, tendereſt methods of perſuaſion.

I had a daughter, ſaid I, whom I indulged in every wiſh, and what was the reſult? She deſpiſed my advice, and I was the object of her contempt and ridicule. I loſt her at the age of ſixteen. Matilda was then only ſeven, and I determined never to injure her by indulgence. But did not your ladyſhip, replied Mrs. Villars in the mildeſt tone, deviate into an equally dangerous extreme? An unlimited indulgence, inſtead of being a proof of affection, is real unkindneſs: but on the contrary, ſhall a parent deprive herſelf of that tender filial regard which produces the confidence of friend-

friendſhip? I never granted to a child's importunity what I had denied on reaſonable motives, and my children were ſoon ſo perfectly convinced of my love for them, that they acquieſced in my refuſals.—I don't ſuſpect the goodneſs of your deſign; but, deareſt madam, who is ſo proper as a mother, acting and conſidered as a friend, to temper with prudence the gaiety of a youthful mind? to direct the tender heart to a worthy object, and to teach the paſſions to move within the ſphere of virtue? Can it be expected that youth ſhould foreſee the conſequence of a raſh action, when age and experience have been ſo frequently miſtaken? Miſs Egerton's conduct has been very faulty, but was not lady Egerton the primary cauſe of her daughter's diſobedience? Be not diſpleaſed, dear madam; the preſent ſituation of affairs require me to be perfectly explicit.—If your daughter has made choice of a man capable of render-

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ing her happy, your deſign is anſwered, tho' the means were erroneous. If her hopes have deceived her, will you aggravate her misfortune by depriving her of maternal conſolation? No, madam, you cannot caſt off the mother. Perhaps Mr. Stamford, irritated at your unkindneſs, may revenge his diſappointment on your daughter, and ſhe may ſuffer a ſeverer puniſhment than her fault deſerves, or than you deſign to inflict: if your diſpleaſure has not abated his love, you injure both by involving them in difficulties it is in your power to prevent.

Oh! madam, extend an eye of pity on your unhappy child! receive her into favour, and ſhe will feel the deepeſt contrition for having offended ſo forgiving a parent.

What! anſwered I, receive her without an application for forgiveneſs? Without an excuſe, or expreſſion of concern for her fault?

Con-

Conſider, my dear lady Egerton, reſumed Mrs. Villars, you denounced the moſt bitter indignation againſt her: you forbade her entrance into your houſe, and commanded her not to trouble you with ſupplications, for you would never receive her into favour. I was ſhocked when you communicated to me this vehemence, and determined to attempt effecting a reconciliation: ſo irreconcilable a diſpoſition is more blameable than the fault which excited your reſentment. Perhaps your daughter ought to have written, but ſhe is married; would you have her expreſs a wiſh to be releaſed from the man to whom ſhe has vowed love and obedience? on whoſe affection her happineſs depends? Who can tell whether he has not (incenſed at your cruelty) prevented her from purſuing the dictates of her inclination? Would you have her be guilty of a ſecond diſobedience?

Ah!

Ah! madam, let maternal tenderneſs reſume its place in your heart.——Yes,—you will forgive her——I ſee you will.

How could I reſiſt ſo amiable an advocate! I yielded to her intreaties, I promiſed to ſee my daughter on my return, and if I hear ſhe has a kind huſband, to give them the fortune her father intended for her. But, continued I, you prevent the effects of my gratitude. You rob me of the power——Do not, interrupted ſhe, do not, I intreat your ladyſhip, mention ſuch a bequeſt and gift; I cannot bear the *appearance* of a mercenary attachment, were there no ſtronger objections to your propoſal. The reconciliation I have been ſo happy as to promote gives me the moſt rational and delightful gratification. If you think me deſerving your affection, I aſk no more than the continuance of it.

Miſs Villars's entrance turned the converſation on other ſubjects.——My poor girl

girl *has* been unkindly treated. I believe, I ſhall haſten my return into Northamptonſhire to ſeal her forgiveneſs. I feel a real joy in my determination. I would have her remain ignorant of my deſign, till I can give her a perſonal aſſurance. She is reinſtated in the affection of a mother, who hopes to be conſidered from henceforth as her friend.

I don't know how I ſhall part from Mrs. Villars. Every ſentiment that is great and noble dwells in her mind: but I have too long ceaſed to be a parent, while I indulged the impulſes of friendſhip. My heart is *intendered* (if I may uſe the expreſſion) on the proſpect of ſeeing my child. You, Mrs. Griffin, who have never been a mother, can have no idea of the glow of ſenſibility that warms my breaſt. You are more capable of judging from your own friendly heart, of the regard with which I ſubſcribe myſelf

Your's moſt ſincerely,

E. EGERTON.

LETTER V.

LADY EGERTON to Mrs. GRIFFIN.

OH! Mrs. Griffin, what a woman is Mrs. Villars! What a ſurprize have I experienced! a joyful one! You ſhall have a full account.

Mrs. Villars reſumed this morning the ſubject moſt pleaſing to me, and excited in me an eager impatience to ſee my child. As we were converſing, a ſervant entered and deſired to ſpeak to my friend. I was ſo intently engroſſed by thoughts of my daughter, that I was ſcarcely ſenſible of Mrs. Villars's abſence—She returned with a glow upon her cheeks, joy ſparkling in her eye. May I, ſaid ſhe, become a petitioner to you for another favour? May I introduce to you a daughter, eager to implore forgiveneſs, and a ſon who will ſtudy to deſerve your love?

What could I ſay? Regardleſs of Mrs. Villars, I flew to the door. My daughter appeared on her knees before me. Tears trickled down her face. Can you pardon me? ſhe cryed. Do *you* forgive? ſaid I, tenderly embracing her. I claſped her to my boſom.——Never ſure was ſo extatic a ſcene! never did I feel ſo much the mother!—Mrs. Villars, the kind Mrs. Villars ſhed tears of joy.

When our firſt tranſports ſubſided, Another penitent, ſaid ſhe, waits for admittance, and ſolicits your pardon. You muſt releaſe Mrs. Stamford, continued ſhe ſmiling; her huſband claims ſome ſhare of your tenderneſs.

I will own to you, Mrs. Griffin, that I felt a painful emotion at the name of Mr. Stamford. Some remains of reſentment were awakened, but Mrs. Villars compoſed every tumultuous thought. Your daughter's happineſs, ſaid ſhe, cannot be complete,

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while the partner of her heart ſuffers uneaſineſs. He has made it his endeavour to contribute to *her* happineſs. Can you delay in giving her power to promote *his*?

I is he, anſwered I haſtily, has he been kind? Didſt thou loſe a mother by gaining an affectionate huſband? Where is he?

Mrs. Villars ſcarcely gave me time to aſk; ſhe left us, and immediately returned with Mr. Stamford; his ſubmiſſion engaged my affection. He threw himſelf at my feet, and beſought my forgiveneſs of a fault, which owed its foundation to real love. I could only bleſs and embrace him. My heart felt too much joy, to expreſs its emotions. Our converſation during the whole evening was too unconnected to be remembered.

I am really pleaſed with Mr. Stamford. He is modeſt, unaffected, and polite. His looks are expreſſive of true tenderneſs for my daughter, whoſe every glance is ani-

mated by love.—Their fondneſs ſhall be rewarded, but I have inſiſted on their leaving Mr. Stamford's family. I do not aſk them to live with me; my temper is violent and capricious. I have been too much accuſtomed to unreſiſted ſway. They ſhall ſtay with me in town till the houſe in Northamptonſhire is fitted for their reception, when I will go down with them; and after they are ſettled, ſhall make London my place of reſidence.

Saturday. Another obligation to Mrs. Villars. She ſent a letter with a bank note for 100*l.* to my daughter, who acknowledged ſhe could not have undertaken the journey without it. Excellent woman! I incloſe hers and my daughter's letter. I have repaid the money, and intreated that ſhe would add to the favours already conferred on me, that of obliging me with Miſs Villars's company to town: She has complied with my requeſt. The

amiable girl thanked me with a graceful air, yet fixed her eyes tenderly on Mrs. Villars till a tear ſtarting, ſhe haſtily quitted the room. I remarked to that lady her daughter's unwillingneſs to leave her. I obſerve it, Madam, ſaid ſhe, my Flavia has never been abſent from me; but it is time ſhe ſhould ſee a little of the great world, and be under the guardianſhip of her own diſcretion aided by your prudent counſels. I will own to your ladyſhip that I have another reaſon for parting from her. Mr. Villars's mother, who has hitherto reſided chiefly in France, of which country ſhe is a native, is coming to pay her laſt viſit to England, with a French family. She intends to paſs ſome weeks here. I have never ſeen her ſince Mr. Villars's death, and I muſt confeſs I rejoice in reſigning my daughter to your ladyſhip, as I know my mother indulges a turn of converſation very improper

proper for the attention of a young perſon. It would be a pain to be under the neceſſity of perpetually controverting her opinions (to which I ſhall now ſhew my diſlike by ſilence only) and yet I ſhould be infinitely more ſhocked, to hazard my daughter's prejudice. I intruſt her then to your ladyſhip, and I intreat you will be a ſecond mother to her. My inſtructions have hitherto influenced her conduct, or rather, ſupported by the hand of providence, her mind has ever retained that image of purity, in which it was firſt created.

On Thurſday I have determined to leave this happy place. Mr. and Mrs. Stamford are ſo charmed with Mrs. Villars, that they declare they ſhall part from her with the utmoſt regret.

The tender Flavia dreads the moment of ſeparation. She has left me. I muſt appear very ungrateful to your ladyſhip,

she has been saying; but believe me, madam, I have a proper sense of the honour of your invitation; my uneasiness arises from the thoughts of being absent from my mother: such a parent! oh! madam, I see you sympathize with me.

I applauded the sweet girl's tenderness, I joined in her encomiums on my excellent friend.

My eyes overflow on the thoughts of the little distance between this day and Thursday. I can only see to add my name to the assurance of being,

Dear madam,

Your ever affectionate

E. EGERTON.

LETTER VI.

[Incloſed in the foregoing.]

Mrs. VILLARS to Mrs. STAMFORD.

MADAM,

THOUGH I am perſonally a ſtranger to you, the name of Villars muſt ſurely be known to you as that of the friend, whom lady Egerton honoured with her company from the Bath. She has imparted to me the unhappy breach your marriage occaſioned, and acknowledges her ſeverity might repreſs your confidence: lady Egerton appears willing to forgive the error of love, and I flatter myſelf that I ſhall have the ſatisfaction of being witneſs to the perfect happineſs of all parties, in a confirmed reconciliation.

Permit me, dear Mrs. Stamford, as a friend to remonſtrate, that however blameable lady Egerton has been in ſeverity, the duty

duty of a child has been greatly infringed by you. A mother's harſhneſs, however painful to a daughter, is deſigned (though a miſtaken method) to ſecure the child's reverence and obedience. You have caſt off the authority to which you owed ſubmiſſion in all lawful commands. But I would only awaken a ſenſe of your fault, without inſpiring an unavailing regret for the commiſſion of it. I hope Mr. Stamford's merit juſtifies your choice, and is a ſecurity for your happineſs.

Lady Egerton knows nothing of this letter, for I procured a direction from her woman, without imparting my deſign.

I beg, Madam, you will immediately ſet out with Mr. Stamford for ——— in Eſſex. If you ſtop at the entrance of the wood about a quarter of a mile from the houſe, and acquaint me with your arrival, I will introduce you to a mother who

who is impatient to extend to you her forgiveneſs.

The incloſed bill may render the haſty journey leſs inconvenient to you. I am certain lady Egerton would have prevented this loan, if ſhe had known my intention; but I hope you will excuſe the freedom I take as it proceeds from a deſire of giving her a moſt pleaſing ſurprize. Be aſſured, dear madam, you have a real friend in

Your humble ſervant,

SOPHIA VILLARS.

LETTER VII.

[Incloſed in lady Egerton's.]

Mrs. STAMFORD to Mrs. VILLARS.

WHEN I received the favour of Mrs. Villars's letter, the moſt tormenting fears had taken poſſeſſion of my ſoul. The family into which I am married are

not

not worthy of an alliance with my mother. I except my husband, whose behaviour has been uniformly kind.

Your name, madam, was indeed familiar to me, and your character had attracted my highest esteem and veneration: but could I expect such generosity from a stranger, when a mother had abandoned me? I had however indeed deserved the treatment I received, I shall fly into her presence with a heart dutifully anxious for a reconciliation. Mr. Stamford will accompany me to receive her blessing: we hope to be at ——— on Thursday.

I am, madam, with the most lively gratitude, which can never cease but with life,

Your faithfully affectionate

MATILDA STAMFORD.

LETTER VIII.

Lady EGERTON to Mrs. VILLARS.

DEAR MADAM,

I MUST address *you* as Selima does Tamerlane,

"Where shall my wonder and my praise
"begin?"

I am *oppressed* with obligations, not from the disposition of my benefactress, but the inability of the obliged. A grateful heart is all my claim to the friendship of Mrs. Villars;—but it is the heart she values.

Accept then, madam, my acknowledgments for my life, for my own and my child's happiness, and believe that it is my first wish to give you more real proofs of my love and gratitude, than mere professions.

Miss Villars has acquainted you with our safe arrival in town. She will very soon

ſoon ſend you a longer letter.—Nothing could ſo ſoon have reconciled me to a ſeparation from you as the company of your amiable daughter. Her tender melancholy, her expreſſive ſilence ſoothed my uneaſineſs.

Every day heightens my ſatisfaction in the reconciliation you ſo generouſly promoted: Mr. and Mrs. Stamford are one of the moſt fond pairs that ever engaged in the matrimonial ſtate: I muſt confeſs much happier than her father and mother, who were married with the conſent of friends.

Be in no hurry, dear madam, to recall Miſs Villars, but add to our happineſs by your preſence. Your Flavia ſends duty. My ſon and daughter deſire you will accept their grateful acknowledgments and beſt reſpects. I am, my dear Mrs. Villars,

Your faithful, and moſt affectionate

E. EGERTON.

LETTER IX.

Mrs. VILLARS to lady EGERTON.

A Generous mind, my dear lady Egerton, always accuſtoms itſelf to conſider an acquittance of the debt of benevolence and civility, as inſtances in others, of ſuperior greatneſs of ſoul. I have no right to the acknowledgments your ladyſhip offers me; I could not have acted otherwiſe than I have done, without tranſgreſſing the duties it is no merit to practiſe.

I congratulate you, madam, on the happineſs of your daughter. She and Mr. Stamford deſervedly poſſeſs your tendereſt affection. You were leſs happy, you tell me, in marriage, "with the conſent "of friends, than Mrs. Stamford, who "violated her filial duty." I am certain you was not unhappy *becauſe* your choice concurred

concurred with your friends' inclination: it muſt be ſome other circumſtances which affected your peace. Will you, madam, pardon this ſtyle of reprehenſion? The privilege of friendſhip encourages me to be unreſerved. My mother comes here next week. When ſhe leaves me, I ſhall accept the kind invitation, which will give me the opportunity of enjoying dear lady Egerton's and Mrs. Stamford's company. My dear girl's abſence affects me even more than I expected, but ſhe ſhall be debarred from no pleaſure for the ſelf-gratification of a fond mother.

My bleſſing and love attend her. I will not aſk you to do me the *honour* of accepting my beſt reſpects: our friendſhip is ſuperior to formality, and it is more in the language of friendſhip to exchange mutual aſſurances of affection, than to derive honour from your *title*, when I am acquainted with your *virtues*.

I am,

I am, dear madam, with the moſt reſpectful return of love and eſteem to you and your amiable family,

Your ſincerely devoted friend,
and faithful humble ſervant,
SOPHIA VILLARS.

LETTER X.

Miſs VILLARS to Mrs. VILLARS.

MOST DEAR AND HON. MADAM,

MY firſt letter contained only an information of our ſafe arrival and health. I had not even time to acquaint you that my uneaſineſs on leaving you was not diſſipated by the variety of objects that paſſed before my eyes: indeed I was under no reſtraint; for lady Egerton's melancholy was little inferior to mine; and Mr. and Mrs. Stamford indulged my tenderneſs by their praiſes of my dear mother.

We have ſcarcely been a moment alone all the paſt week, for lady Egerton has a numerous acquaintance. I am in a new world, where all things ſurpriſe, but few delight me. I will attempt a deſcription of ſome of our viſitors and converſations.

Miſs Bridgewater is the intimate friend of Mrs. Stamford: her perſon is extremely pretty, her addreſs eaſy and uncommonly lively. She converſes with a ſtranger with all the familiarity of an old acquaintance. Sir Richard Maynwaring is her admirer; he is a young gentleman of no refined underſtanding, but agreeable in perſon, has the forms of politeneſs, and is moſt firmly attached to the gay Miſs Bridgewater. This lady waited on the family the day after our arrival: when *I* appeared, My God! cried ſhe, turning to Mrs. Stamford, who is that fine girl, Stamford! What an amiable ruſtic? I bluſhed at the audible whiſper;

per; ſhe continued gazing on me with a good-humoured freedom. In a few minutes, I ſee, Miſs Villars, ſaid ſhe, you have not been long in town. O Chr—ſt, what a rig-my-rowl of flouncing and trimming! Nobody wears ſuch a quantity; let *me* dreſs you. I ſwear, Villars, if you was not a very handſome girl, that cap would abſolutely diſguiſe you.

Mrs. Dawſon, a lady whoſe looks ſeem to betray an unfeeling heart, enjoyed my confuſion, which the kind lady Egerton endeavoured to diſpel. What a critic you are, Miſs Bridgewater! ſaid ſhe; Miſs Villars intends to have her dreſs modernized; a ſuperficial obſerver *may* diſcern blemiſhes in her *dreſs*, but the moſt accurate critic can only diſcover beauties in her *mind*.

I bowed to lady Egerton in ſilence. Lord bleſs you, my dear, reſumed Miſs Bridgewater, I hope you are not offended;

I am a giddy creature, I mean no harm, but I ſpeak all I think. You are ſo agreeable, madam, anſwered I, it is impoſſible to be diſpleaſed with you.—Well, well, ſaid ſhe, then there is no hurt done; but for heaven's ſake, lady Egerton, what have you been doing ſo long in the country? I have been perfectly happy, Miſs Bridgewater, replied lady Edgerton, in the ſociety of this lady's mother, who is the moſt excellent of women. Is ſhe not, my dear? I could only ſay, Indeed, madam, ſhe *is* the beſt of parents and of women.

O! God, exclaimed Miſs Bridgewater, you bring to my remembrance a lady, who uſed to ſay ſhe had an excellent huſband; and how do you think ſhe explained it? Why truly, ſhe propoſed to the fellow every thing ſhe knew he liked, and then was delighted with him, becauſe he purſued his own inclinations; I dare ſwear he was more pleaſed with gratifying his

own

own taſte, than charm'd with the good creature's dutiful intentions. Ha! Villars, does the cap fit thy mother? Thou art *certainly a good girl.*

Indeed, madam, ſaid I, you do not judge truly of my dear mother. Why then, interrupted ſhe, you have better luck than I had, but you are more deſerving. Hark! who comes here? My ſwain as I live.

"My preſence only 'tis can make him "bleſt,
"Heal his unquiet mind and tune his "ſoul.

Sir Richard, after paying his proper compliments to the company, told Miſs Bridgewater he came to intreat the favour of her hand at a private ball that evening. Ha! a ball, cried ſhe: O! I adore dancing. —Well, but I muſt go home to dreſs, before I confer this favour of my hand. I wonder, Sir Richard, you don't chuſe to

retrench your obligations, for I muſt be abſolute ſovereign after marriage. I am ſo generouſly condeſcending now. Oh! L—d! I have dropt a ſecret; well, I can't help it; yes, Villars, I ſhall, *I believe*, ſoon take that man to be my wedded huſband.—Your ſervant, ladies, you'll excuſe my abrupt departure.

She then left us, Sir Richard attending her. I expreſſed myſelf charm'd with Miſs Bridgewater. Lady Egerton ſays, ſhe is of a good diſpoſition, but gay and thoughtleſs even to a fault.

The next day Miſs Bridgewater called upon us, and finding me reading the Rambler in Mrs. Stamford's room, O L—d! Villars, ſhe cried, what! a young girl *read* the firſt time of her coming to London! I am very fond of reading, madam, anſwered I, it has always been my higheſt amuſement. Don't you love it? You have

have read ſome of the periodical papers to be ſure; which do you like beſt?

Why child, ſays ſhe, I like all in turn, as thus: I like to be a *Spectator* at church, a *Tatler* at the tea-table, an *Adventurer* at cards, a *Connoiſeur* at the milliner's, a *Rambler* at Vauxhall and Ranelagh, an *Idler* on Sundays, and a *Guardian* to my lap-dog.

Gay, agreeable, yet too inconſiderate trifler! Mr. Mildnall, a beau of fifty, is another of our original characters. He is a male coquet, the firſt of that turn I ever ſaw, and I hoped, till I knew him, there was no ſuch *real* exiſtence.

Captain Welmore, and captain Caſtlemain, are frequent viſitors. The former a handſome, genteel, agreeable man, the latter a mere braggadocis. I will give you a dialogue that paſs'd yeſterday; the perſons aſſembled, were Sir Richard Maynwaring, the two officers, Mr. Mildnall,

Mrs. Dawſon, Miſs Bridgewater, beſides the family and myſelf.

Mr. Mildnall. Pray, Miſs Villars, was you at the play laſt night?

Flavia. No, ſir, I have not been at any public diverſion yet.

Mr. Mildnall. Then you have not heard that divine creature Miſs Brent. Good God! her voice is celeſtial harmony. But (taking my hand) my charming Miſs Villars will be ſo much the object of admiration, that her attention will be diverted from others.

Flavia. No, ſir, if I deſerved your compliment, I hope I ſhould never loſe the power of admiring what is truly amiable, for the gratification of my vanity.

Mr. Mildnall. My ſweet creature! what an adorable humility! but you muſt be the delight of all who ſee you, while beauty and modeſty are eſtimable.

Miſs

Miſs Bridgewater. Captain Welmore, Captain Caſtlemain, can't you *relieve* that gentleman a little? The L—d bleſs us! Who would not think, Mildnall, that at your age the vein of flattery muſt be exhauſted?

Mr. Mildnall, angrily. My age, madam?

Captain Welmore. Come, Sir, ben't offended. The lady is perhaps miſtaken, but beauties have a right to ſay what they pleaſe. I agree with you, Mr. Mildnall, that ſuch a form as Miſs Villars's joined with ſuch ſweetneſs, is irreſiſtably enchanting.

Miſs Bridgewater. Ay, captain, a complimental flouriſh from a young officer, is as much an eſſential, as the ſound of the trumpet before battle? Pray, captain Caſtlemain, when did you return from abroad? Were you expoſed to any danger?

Captain Caſtlemain. Yes, yes, madam, to famine, ſword, and peſtilence? To ſpeak without

without vanity, I have been ſucceſsful in ſeveral ſkirmiſhes, and if only courage and conduct had been required, I had done wonders indeed; but malicious fortune defeated my hopes.

Miſs Bridgewater. They *who deſerve moſt*, ha! captain? I underſtand you. But let's call another ſubject. What ſhall it be, lady Egerton? Do you propoſe it.

Lady Egerton. Why then, I will aſk you ladies, if you have ever read Lady Julia Mandeville?

Mrs. Dawſon. I can't ſay I have never read it, my lady. I did juſt look it over. 'Tis wrote by a woman, I am told; that made me ſick of it: ſurely the women of theſe days are ſtrange conceited creatures: I have no notion of women's writing: I don't wonder the men are afraid of taking them for wives. Such learned ladies are like to make miſtreſſes of families! I never wrote half a dozen letters in my life. Wo-

men

men may find enough to do without interfering with the proper employment of men.

Lady Egerton. But dear Mrs. Dawſon, why is writing a more improper female employment than cards, a conſtant round of company, or public diverſion? I don't mean that cards are not ſometimes neceſſary, I know that polite viſits muſt be paid, and that public amuſements are ſometimes not only innocent, but laudable indulgencies; yet when it is made the buſineſs of life to dreſs, viſit, frequent the diverſions, or be ſtationed at a card table, I appeal to the company, if writing be not a more rational employ. The men, madam, will ſcarcely be afraid of women, becauſe they are capable of being agreeable companions, and uſeful friends.

Mrs. Dawſon. I think the ladies may as well turn grooms, and viſit their horſes.

Lady

Lady Egerton. Why ſo, madam? Cuſtom has I know debarred our ſex in general, from the advantages the men enjoy; but the latter begin to indulge a more liberal way of thinking. A woman of refined underſtanding and virtue, ſuch a one as the authoreſs of Lady Julia Mandeville, as ſhe cannot be ſuppoſed ignorant of the duties of life, ſo ſhe will not neglect to practiſe them. Shall we blame her if ſhe has no reliſh for the gaieties of life? If ſhe can improve her own mind, and convey inſtruction, or if ſhe only *endeavour* to inſpire virtue, ſhall we be diſpleaſed with the preference ſhe gives this employment, to a round of formal viſits, or a card engagement?

Cuſtom is no ſufficient argument, unleſs it be ſupported by reaſon: here, reaſons pleads, and has triumphed over cuſtom. The other employ you mentioned

is

is deſtined for a maſculine exerciſe, both by reaſon and cuſtom.

Mrs. Dawſon made no anſwer, but I ſaw ſhe had not a ſenſe of conviction, and that her ſpleen and ill nature were not vanquiſhed. Lady Egerton delighted me; if *ſhe* had not aſſerted the female right to the uſe of the *pen*, *I* certainly ſhould have attempted to defend it, after having received ſo much pleaſure and inſtruction from my mother's writings; but my intereſt in the ſubject would perhaps have prevented my ſpeech, if I could have collected proper arguments.—I could not help ſaying, that I was charmed with lady Julia, that I thought the ſtile eaſy, and the ſtory natural and pathetic; the ſentiments juſt, and very inſtructive.

Lady Egerton. I am pleaſed with every part but the cataſtrophe: That ſhocks me. I ſee no reaſon why the lovers ſhould not be happy.

Miſs Bridgewater. I adore lady Anne: the reſt is *very well*, except the concluſion which is *horrid*. I ſhould like to ſee ſuch a ſweet fellow as Harry Mandeville, but my fate will be determined before there is ſuch a formation. Don't look grave, Sir Richard, I am very well ſatisfied. This is all rant.

Sir Richard. I know my dear Miſs Bridgewater can't mean to make any perſon miſerable, and I have her promiſe that ſhe will make *me* happy.

Miſs Bridgewater. Far from it, Maynwaring. I promiſed only to be your *wife*. No aſſurance that you will be *happy*. *Sir Richard.* It is impoſſible to be unhappy with you. *Miſs Bridgewater.* "O! man "for flattery and deceit renown'd." Well, well, enjoy your flattering dream.

Whilſt we were converſing, the two officers and Mrs. Dawſon were talking in a whiſper, upon which Miſs Bridgewater cried

cried out, I'll have no whiſpering—Come, Dawſon, tell us what you was ſaying.

Captain Welmore. The lady, madam, was enquiring about Mrs. Vincent and Miſs Batterſea. The firſt ſhe ſays is in love with our colonel, and the other is married to a common ſoldier. I own, I never heard any thing to Mrs. Vincent's diſadvantage; and as to Miſs Batterſea, ſhe is young and unthinking, has been very ill treated by her father, and is greatly to be pitied.

Miſs Bridgewater. Thou art a good natur'd fellow, Welmore; but prithee, dear Dawſon, don't verify the remark, that women love ſcandal. For my part, I rattle away, talk nonſenſe perpetually, but I am never diſpoſed to find fault, except with dreſs or ſuch trifles, ha! Villars? Reputation, good lady, is not to be ſported with; a ſtain in it is of a blackmore dye.

Mrs. Dawſon panted, bluſhed, and ſoon took leave to my great ſatisfaction, for I

diſlike ſcandal and the lovers of it, and was pleaſed with Miſs Bridgewater's obſervation. The reſt of the company ſtaid the evening; but as the card tables were ſet out, there paſſed no more converſation worth relating.

I like London very well, but a continual round of company would ſoon fatigue me. I am impatient to be at an Oratorio, and a Play. Lady Egerton promiſes to go with me to both, next week, and Miſs Bridgewater is to be of our party.

Oh! my dear mother, tho' I wiſh to partake the diverſions of which I have formed a delightful idea, yet with much more eagerneſs do I deſire a letter from you. I know you will not diſappoint me; never was I diſappointed when I relied on my mother's goodneſs.

Your praiſe is a theme we can never exhauſt, and a conſtant one when we are free from company.

I am

I am unwilling to conclude, but the ſupper bell ſummons me, and permits me only to ſubſcribe myſelf,

Deareſt, ever honoured madam,

Your dutiful and affectionate daughter,

FLAVIA VILLARS.

LETTER XI.

Mrs. VILLARS to Miſs VILLARS.

MY DEAR GIRL,

YOUR letter has reſtored to me ſome degree of that ſatisfaction which your preſence never failed to impart. I will not ſcruple to confeſs that my ſpirits have been greatly depreſſed ſince your departure, but I am ſo far from deſiring to recall you, that I wiſh you ſhould ſee more of that tumultuous world into which you are now initiated. May your obſervations on life enable you to diſtinguiſh between cuſtoms which are the adop-

tions of caprice and folly, and thoſe duties which are the genuine offspring of reaſon and religion! I hope the goodneſs of my dear child's heart will preſerve her from the contagion of bad example: Yet alas! my Flavia, even that ſoftneſs of diſpoſition, which has conſtituted the refined happineſs of your paſt days, may occaſion a more exquiſite degree of future diſquietude, if you do not exert the fortitude of a Chriſtian.

Be careful, my dear child, whilſt you exclaim againſt cenſures, that you do not become guilty of the error you condemn. You are diſguſted with the manners of the officer, you diſlike Mrs. Dawſon, and you are pleaſed with Miſs Bridgewater. Difference of education, and many caſual circumſtances occaſion a diverſity of ſentiment and opinion. We muſt not always eſtimate the pleaſures of others by what contributes to our own. If you are really ſuperior to another, let not that ſuperiority excite

excite in you either vanity or contempt; such exaltation leſſens even that merit for which you applaud yourſelf. Let us compare the faults of others with our own; remember the latter to preſerve our charity and humility, and forſake them to obtain perfection. I would have you deteſt guilt, yet pity and pray for the guilty; be tender and compaſſionate to the ſufferings incurred by vice, yet zealous to promote the cauſe of virtue. I wiſh you to be prudently chearful, leſt your gravity ſhould diſguſt your own ſex; and to avoid levity, leſt you encourage improper addreſſes from the other. Never ſuppoſe there is a neceſſity for conforming to the manners which your reaſon diſapproves, though the cuſtom of the world may ſeem to authorize your practice.

To plead cuſtom in defence of a fault, is to intimate that offences become more excuſable by being multiplied; an inference as weak as it is dangerous.

I acknowledge, my dear child, that Mrs. Dawſon's mind claims no alliance with yours; but remember that a vicious or unfriendly diſpoſition is a greater torment to its poſſeſſor, than it can be to others, and is the proper object not of reſentment, but of compaſſion. Always turn your attention on the bright ſide of another's character, but penetrate into and ſtudy to diſpel the ſhades of your own.

Miſs Bridgewater has much ſpirit and genuine humour; but whilſt I admire her lively turn, I condemn her for uſing expreſſions, which though they are to her mere expletives, ſhew a want of proper reflection, and ſeem to authorize that prophaneneſs, by which many diſgrace the privilege of ſpeech. In a word, though Miſs Bridgewater diverts *you*, and pleaſes *me* by her wit, yet ſhe is not a perſon in whom you can repoſe the confidence of friendſhip; ſhe is too thoughtleſs to cultivate its requiſites,

and

and a heart tender and affectionate as yours, would ſuffer from a livelineſs, which would rally your ſenſibility. Never be ſo complaiſant as to admire her faults, but if ſhe will permit you, endeavour to ſubdue them. Perhaps you may render her worthy of your friendſhip, but till you are aſſured that ſhe is ſo, do not admit her into your confidence. Sir Richard Maynwaring with no very extenſive underſtanding nor refined ſuſceptibilities, will be happier with this gay lady than a man of more exalted abilities or delicacy of ſentiment.

As to Mr. Midnall's character, it will expoſe him to that deriſion from the world which would be inconſiſtent with your ſweetneſs. His compliments and thoſe of Captain Welmore muſt be conſidered as mere expletives of each character and profeſſion. Not that I would have my Flavia think, that her perſon and accompliſhments are incapable of attracting admiration.

Nature has endowed her with every charm that can captivate the heart of man, but it is not external beauty which preſerves affection. Virtue, my child, virtue in its moſt comprehenſive ſenſe can alone beſtow the unfading charm, and even compenſate for the infliction of deformity.——I would have you expect compliments without attempting to *inſpire* admiration; and O! my ſweet girl, I would guard your ſuſceptible heart againſt an imprudent attachment. Let not appearances deceive your judgement and miſlead your choice. The only permanent happineſs is the reſult of reaſon and virtue.

I have read Lady Julia Mandeville with much pleaſure. I approve of the cataſtrophe, not only as it is written in a very animated pathetic manner, but as it inculcates a different moral from the generality of novels. It ſhews that the Deity makes uſe of the ungovernable paſſions of mankind

kind to prove the inſtability of human expectations, and it animates our endeavours for the attainment of everlaſting felicity.——The moral ſentiments are excellent and expreſſed with elegance, and the political opinions particularly judicious. The goodneſs of the author's heart and her abilities are I think equally conſpicuous. There will always be ſome to condemn whatever has the appearance of ſuperiority, eſpecially if a perſon deviate from the common employments of her ſex. Even novelty is unpleaſing to many when its *principal* deſign is to inculcate virtue, and entertainment is only a ſecondary motive. Whoever neglects the immediate duties of life, though to promote the cauſe of religion and virtue, has no reaſon to be offended if ſhe incurs the contempt of thoſe who expect that religion and virtue ſhould actuate the conduct as well as the pen of the writer. When every duty is

fulfilled, and even the pleaſures of life are made conducive to virtue, neither contempt ſhould diſcourage from the improvement of time, nor falſe ſhame deter from an endeavour to cultivate in others the ſeeds of piety and morality.

Do not ſuppoſe, my dear child, that I have any apprehenſions injurious to you, nor that I requeſt your confidence to exert my authority. To offer advice is the duty of a parent, and to intereſt myſelf in your happineſs is a proof of the ſincere affection of a guardian and a friend. Always act in conſequence of this ſelf-evident truth, that virtue is the only ſource of permanent felicity, and that however you may be ſurrounded by the natural evils of mortality, you can never be overwhelmed by them, whilſt you place your dependence on the Almighty, and can with humble confidence indulge the hopes of a bleſſed futurity.

I had

I had a letter laſt week from your brother, who mentions you with the affection you deſerve. Your grandmother is not yet arrived here, perhaps ſhe may call upon you in London. I have already told you, ſhe has not that tenderneſs of diſpoſition which my Flavia poſſeſſes, and that her foreign connections have rather weakened the tyes of domeſtic attachments.

My love and eſteem for lady Egerton and her family are heightened by their kindneſs to you. My beſt reſpects attend them.

Believe me to be, my dear child,

Your moſt affectionate mother,

SOPHIA VILLARS.

LETTER XII.

Miſs VILLARS to Mrs. VILLARS.

A THOUSAND thanks are due to my deareſt mother for her kind letter. If I ever deviate from the path of duty, I ſhould be inexcuſable. I write without reſerve, and indeed I never harboured a thought I wiſh to conceal from you: no, my dear parent, you ſhall ever be the repoſitory of my thoughts, and the guide of my actions.

I was ſo delighted on the receipt of your letter, that I retired to my chamber to give it an attentive peruſal. The gay Miſs Bridgewater hearing where I was, burſt into the room. Hey-day! ſhe cry'd; what! but ten days in town, and have already received a love-epiſtle as long as a law indenture? Well who is it?

"Oh! anſwer me,
"Let me not burſt in ignorance."

Indeed,

Indeed, ſaid I, my dear Miſs Bridgewater, you are miſtaken: this letter is from my mother. To convince her I read ſome parts of it, and will ſend you a few of her comments. The firſt general one was, 'Your mother, child, is certainly the offspring of Jupiter's brain:' when I came to that part which cenſures her abuſe of words—Pho! cry'd ſhe, that's nonſenſical; My God, Lord, and ſome other of my common expreſſions are my *notes of admiration.*

I am delighted with your gaiety, madam, replied I, whilſt you confine it within proper bounds; but do you not ſeem to juſtify the practice of the common ſwearer? If *you trifle* with the name of God, *he* will *blaſpheme* it.

I believe you are in the right, ſaid ſhe, but for Ch—'s ſake, who can always think before they ſpeak. What again! Miſs Bridgewater, and when you allow I am in the right? "Who can always think

"before

" before they ſpeak !" Every perſon ought, or they will have great reaſon for ſelf-condemnation. Well, proceed with your letter, reſumed ſhe ; I like your *mother's advice* better than *your corrections*, perhaps, becauſe the chief of it is not addreſſed to me.

When I had finiſhed, ſhe yawned and cried, I wiſh, my dear, you would lend Mr. Cliffon that letter into the pulpit next Sunday. I'll ſwear he never preach'd ſo excellent a ſermon ; L—d ! how my head would have ached after writing ſo much. My dear mother, ſaid I, is fond of writing and reading, and we have by a country life a great deal of time for theſe amuſements. And for my own part I muſt confeſs, though I like town for a few weeks, yet the country is my choice for conſtant reſidence. What charming walks ! how pleaſant to hear the whiſtling of birds, the bleating of ſheep, and to ſee the people employed in country buſineſs.

No more, no more, exclaimed Miſs Bridgewater: O! defend me from being buried in the country;

"Sans *balls*, ſans *plays*, ſans taſte, ſans every thing."

Take my word for it, as honeſt Ranger ſays, thou art a mighty ſilly girl. You find I *do* read——I have read plays, child, innumerable. Romances are too long and tireſome. Novels that are full of the marvellous and ſurprizing, I can't attend to. Mrs. Stamford now deſired Miſs Bridgewater's company in the dining room. I was glad to have an opportunity of giving your letter another peruſal. Oh! my dear mother, while I admire your ſentiments I lament the loſs of your perſonal converſation. How many inſtances of your goodneſs ſhall I be ignorant of! But you are pleaſed with my viſit, and on leaving you, I know no perſon ſo agreeable to me as lady Egerton.

That

That kind friend propoſed to accompany me to the play, the evening after I ſent away my letter to you, but an indiſpoſition prevented her. She would have perſuaded Mrs. Stamford to go with Miſs Bridgewater and me, but I obſerved her unwillingneſs to leave her mother. I was charmed with it, and refuſed to go till lady Egerton was well enough to be of the party. Miſs Bridgewater preſſed me to take the preſent opportunity with her, but it was no ſelf-denial for me to decline it; I was determined not to be ſeen in any public place without lady Egerton or Mrs. Stamford. I believe Miſs Bridgewater was rather diſpleaſed, but as I thought my refuſal juſtifiable, I perſevered in it.

Two days after, lady Egerton being recovered, we went to the play of the Suſpicious Huſband. I was ſo fortunate as to ſee the juſtly-admired Garrick. Tho' Ranger's character is that of an abandoned libertine,

bertine, our horror of vice is leſſened, becauſe the rake appears too agreeable to be contemptible. Surely this was ill judged in the author. Was it not, my dear mother? It hurts one to have felt pleaſure, which will not bear reflection.

Laſt night we went again to Drury-lane. The play was the Conſcious Lovers. I think this is one of your favourite comedies. Mrs. Cibber was inimitable. She was Indiana herſelf. Miſs Bridgewater was with us both nights, and to own the truth, I wiſhed for her abſence. She was ſo full of prattle, I loſt ſeveral ſpeeches of Garrick's, who utters every word with propriety. Every gentleman who came into the box, was, an *ugly devil*, or a *handſome toad*; but with ſir Richard, the aſſiduous ſir Richard, ſhe was inceſſantly chatting; ſometimes laughing at him, at others, enquiring after every unknown face. Then ridiculing any diſagreeable

or

or unfashionable appearance with so much humour, that though I was vex'd at the interruption, and could not approve her satirical talent, it was impossible to forbear laughing.

I called on her the next morning, and found her playing with her monkey and lap-dog. I ask'd her how she could chuse to lose time so? Child, says she, with an affected gravity, do you understand the nature of time? Time, as Mr. Locke and the ingenious Dr. Berkeley agree, is a *succession of ideas*. Now, my dear, it is evident no person can have a quicker succession of ideas than I; *consequently* I can't lose time since I enjoy its *very essence*, what *constitutes its existence*.—Did you imagine me to be a dealer in metaphysicks? A dabler only, child, but I love to answer grave people in their own manner. Like a young lady, who when a grave matron was haranguing on the *laws* of *matter* and

motion

motion in aſtronomy, told her ſhe was going to a ball, where there would be matter and motion enough, and ſhe might ſee a whole room full of gentlemen and ladies turning round upon their axis. But the lively *Miſs* adds, that the matron talks ſo much of fix'd ſtars, ſhe imagines ſhe would not ſtir out of her place for the univerſe. Now, *I* wiſh to blaze in every orbit, continued Miſs Bridgewater.

You would not be quite a comet ſurely, ſaid I, you would not inſpire terror? Admiration and envy, my dear raw girl, are the paſſions I deſire to excite; but, as to the men, poor devils, I have almoſt done tormenting them—I am almoſt married;—Heigh ho! Why ſurely, ſaid I, you are ſatisfied with your choice? Satisfied! you little foolatum, interrupted ſhe, why, to be ſure, I ſhould not have given the man ſuch hopes of happineſs (courtſhip dialect, Villars,) if I had preferred any other;

but I had, notwithstanding, rather live single. Though, on second thoughts, I don't know what to say—he is a good-natured, genteel creature enough, a simpleton, *I believe*. You are perhaps *convinced* of it; but no matter; many a husband is made a fool of; now mine is naturally so; more reputable for me, let me tell you.

How you rattle away, said I; he must never pretend to contradict you; for you have so much to say, and your imagination—Ay, Villars, she again interrupted me, I have a fine imagination, as my brother says, if I would but apply. I have often wished to *apply* my needle and thread to his lips, that I might silence an eternal monitor. He would have me acquire the art of ratiocination (to use one of his words) but the spirit of visibility most certainly destroys in me the operations of wisdom. He sometimes wants me to study astronomy, but I

thank

thank him, I'll have nothing to do with the stars. I consult only my glass, which has *foretold* many certain conquests. I wish to shine with *undiminishable* lustre.—In the eyes of your husband, resumed I.

Our conversation was here interrupted by the monkey, who having observed her playing with a beautiful point fly and lappets, snatched them out of her hands, and pulling them with his teeth and claws, soon rendered them unfit for a part of dress. O! you little mischievous devil, (she cry'd) what are you about? See! Miss Villars. Nay, don't interrupt him. How prettily the toad holds the lace. My sweet pug, if it had been worth a thousand pounds, I must have laughed as I do now, at thy roguery.

She then catched him up, and kissed him several times. The little animal seemed to enjoy the frolic, and looked as if he wished for another prey. I was

fearful my apron or ruffles might be his next attempt, and I found Miſs Bridgewater did not chuſe to diſappoint him. I took leave, ſooner than I ſhould have done, if ſhe had been quite alone, or had had better company.

I ſhall expect another letter from my dear mother, with as much impatience as the firſt; and while I wiſh to merit her approbation, I entreat her never to ſpare any deſerved reproof. It can be only by purſuing the advice of the beſt of parents, and attempting to copy the model of her example, I can become worthy of her eſteem; which, with a continuance of her affection, is eſſentially neceſſary to compleat the happineſs of,

Her ever dutiful daughter,

FLAVIA VILLARS.

LETTER XIII.

Mrs. VILLARS to Miſs VILLARS.

TO praiſe my dear child very highly for her punctuality in writing, would ſhew I had indulged ſuſpicions of her remiſſneſs. From her dutiful affection, I expected that conſtant compliance with my wiſhes, which I have always experienced.

You acted very prudently in refuſing to go with Miſs Bridgewater only, to the play. A young perſon cannot be too cautious in her choice of proper company to uſher her into life. People will be apt to imagine that there is a conformity of diſpoſitions between young perſons who partake together the ſame diverſions, and you might have been regarded as the counterpart of the giddy Miſs Bridgewater. A good play is a rational amuſement at every age; and it ſhould be the deſign of the drama,

"To raiſe the genius and to mend the "heart."

I have known ſome young perſons on their entrance into life, who were never happy but in public places; and thus by being often ſeen, they were ſoon diſregarded; for, my dear girl, it is a juſt though trite obſervation, that a new face will be more admired than a fine one, which has been frequently expoſed. The bloom of modeſty is preſerved by voluntary retirements, but fades in the purſuit of unremitted pleaſures. No man of real underſtanding, ſolid virtue, and true goodneſs of heart (ſuch as I wiſh for the huſband of my Flavia) will think it probable, that a woman only verſed in the forms of civility, and always delighting in ſcenes of diſſipation, is likely to perform the eſſential duties of a connubial life.

I was diverted with your account of Miſs Bridgewater and her monkey, and

I am

I am pleaſed that you have reſolution enough to expreſs your diſapprobation of ſome part of her behaviour. Always remember, my dear, that a falſe ſhame, and the fear of giving offence by compliance with duty, are deſtructive of every virtuous propenſity. Miſs Bridgewater is an agreeable companion, but ſhe is not a valuable friend; ſhe even expoſes her reputation, by an indifference which is always blameable. She does not want virtue, but diſcretion. A certain noble lord tells his ſon; "Defamation and "calumny never attack, but where there "are weak places. They magnify but do "not create;—he muſt be *reſpectable* in "order to be *reſpected*." Without venturing to aſſert that the innocent are *never* calumniated, I may affirm that they *ſeldom* are ſo; or if they be, the ſhafts of calumny are repelled by the breaſt-plate of innocence.

The Conſcious Lovers is really one of my favourite plays, but I don't think it entirely free from faults. The ſcene between Bevil and Myrtle, in the fourth act, is exquiſitely fine; but the character of the lover, though truly amiable, is ſupported by the ſacrifice of the ſon's duty. Are you not ſurprized and concerned at this attack upon an admired hero? I have always accuſtomed myſelf to weigh every character in the exact ſcale of duty, by which means I have diſcovered unexpected deficiencies. Bevil is repreſented as a model of filial perfection; let us examine his right to this character. He is in love with a woman, worthy of the attachment of a man of true honour, and whoſe want of fortune could alone occaſion any objection from his father. He found her in a ſituation moſt capable of inſpiring him with tenderneſs. He relieves her diſtreſs, ſupports her in affluence, becomes the

guardian

guardian of her perſon and her honour, and the lover of her virtue. His father propoſes to him another lady, the object of his friend's affection, and in love with that friend. Bevil never deſigns to marry her. Love, honour, and friendſhip forbid it; but he deceives his father into a belief that he will do ſo, and raiſes hopes which he knows muſt end in diſappointment. Is this performing the part of a dutiful ſon? And to a father, who ſays, "he indulged him in living after his own manner; for, what could be concluded from a behaviour under reſtraint and fear?" Would it not then have been conſiſtent with Bevil's character, to have placed an unreſerved confidence in ſo kind a father? He then would either have been at liberty to indulge his love, or he might have exerted a generoſity more meritorious than that by which he was firſt actuated, if he had reſigned the character of the lover, and

preſerved

preſerved only that of the friend. Indiana's eſteem muſt have been heightened by this conduct, and her wiſhes being deſtroyed in the bud, would never have bloſſomed into expectation. That one object of his deſign was to preſerve Lucinda for his friend, is no defence of his conduct. True friendſhip never requiring the ſacrifice of filial duty and gratitude, nor indeed, could he reaſonably indulge ſuch an hope; for when Lucinda's father found Bevil had no intention of marrying his daughter, as he diſliked Myrtle's attachment, it was moſt likely he would propoſe ſome other perſon. Myrtle has nothing to fear from Bevil, nor has he any thing to expect. The determination of the latter, never to engage himſelf without his father's conſent, is very laudable, but ſets the artifice he practiſes in a more conſpicuous light.—There are many very great beauties in this play. Our hearts flutter like Indiana's,

with

with the pangs of uncertainty, and participate in the tranſports of the diſcovery. In her ſituation ſhe was incited by virtuous apprehenſions and growing love, to promote the eclairciſſement of his real deſigns.

The character of the pedant, is well delineated, but ſome traits in the picture diſguſt the delicacy of the obſerver.

There is much humour diſplayed in the parts of Tom and Phillis; but their familiarity with their ſuperiors is an improper exhibition before the meaner rank of people, who compoſe the greater part of the audience. This play contains many uſeful ſentiments, and much elegant converſation. I wiſh it were entirely adapted to improve the mind, and to exterminate the ſeeds of folly.

Let me adviſe you, my dear girl, never to be implicitly guided by the opinions of others; you have an underſtanding capable

of

of every judicious observation, and a heart susceptive of every good impression. Examine persons and books by the rules of virtue. Where you perceive any deficiency, endeavour to avoid, what you have been enabled to distinguish. You have a right to give your opinion of books, when you do it with modesty, and a deference to the sentiments of others. As much as possible, prevent the infection of bad example, and the effect of injudicious opinions; but attempt it by gentle insinuation rather than making a direct attack upon any prevailing folly.

The Suspicious Husband may be called a pleasing comedy; but your remark, my Flavia, is very just, that we feel a pleasure on which we are ashamed to reflect. There is not one character that exhibits a perfect pattern for our imitation. The person from whom the title of the play is taken, gives us a lively representation of

the

the tormenting paſſion of jealouſy, its unneceſſary fears, its meanneſſes, and the miſeries of which it is the occaſion. The wife ſupports undeſerved indignities, with the reſignation peculiar to virtue. That ſhe does not mention Ranger's temerity, immediately on Mr. Strickland's diſcovery of the hat, may be imputed to the apprehenſions of her huſband's violence, and fears for his ſafety; but her concealment of it afterwards, when he reſolves in conſequence of this affair to part from her, is ſcarcely defenſible. Tired with his unkindneſs, the ſeparation appeared deſirable, and even the juſtification of her innocence leſs eſſential to her happineſs, than a releaſe from her painful ſituation would be. But it is certain, and ſhe acknowledges afterwards, that it was her duty, to diſpel every unfavourable appearance, and to render her ſufferings free from any ſtings of ſelf-accuſation. Jacintha's exploit was

dange-

dangerous and indelicate, and its success does not justify her conduct; her reliance on her lover's honour was supported by his refined passion, but it was a rash adventure. A fine face, and lively wit, kindle a flame in Frankly's breast, more violent than rational. There is a generous frankness in Clarinda's acknowledgment, that shews the sensibility of her heart triumphed over the spirit of coquetry. Bellamy is the true sentimental lover; he feels the passion of love, with all the delicate refinement that female virtue can wish to inspire; but there is an impetuosity in his behaviour to his friend, which will not permit him to attend to his justification. His Jacintha, indeed, appeared in danger, and Frankly's conduct suspicious; but the asseverations of an experienced friend, who had professed his violent attachment to another woman, should have been allowed their due weight.

Ranger's vices are so blended with good qualities, that our detestation of the former are lessened by our approbation of the latter. But we ought never to suffer ourselves to be biassed by *particular* actions to judge favourably of a person's *general* character. Ranger, by his own confession, is debauched and profligate. That he is insensible of the effects of his vices, is so far from being an excuse, that it is an aggravation, as it shews he is a veteran in villainy. I have heard some young ladies exclaim, Oh! he is a charming fellow! such spirits! such good humour and generosity! Thus they are delighted with a few *sallies* of benevolence, and do not consider, that the *general* tenor of his actions is destructive of the happiness of human kind. The generosity of his behaviour in resigning Jacintha to Bellamy, whilst it demands our praise, heightens his condemnation with regard to others of the sex.

He

He exerted the power with which every one is endued, of reſtraining a vicious inclination, for the ſake of his friend's temporal happineſs; but he was indifferent in the important care of his own, and other's eternal felicity.

There is much comic ſpirit in this play, but many indecencies. It is greatly to be wiſhed, that our theatrical entertainments were always calculated to be the ſchools of virtue.

Your grandmother is with me, and very well.—I ſuppoſe you have written to your brother. If *he* is not punctual in his anſwers, I hope *you* will not omit writing to *him*. You know he loves you, and is pleaſed with your letters.

Farewell! Always preſent my beſt reſpects to Lady Egerton's family, and always be aſſur'd that I am, my dear child,

Your truly affectionate mother,

SOPHIA VILLARS.

LETTER XIV.

Mr. VILLARS to Miſs VILLARS.

SO you are arrived in London, my dear ſiſter, you have even been there three weeks, and your ungracious brother has not yet congratulated you on your initiation into the world of gaiety. How many conqueſts have you made? What devaſtation have thoſe ſweet blue eyes occaſioned among our ſex? Let me tell you, Flavia, you have charms ſufficient "to ſet the "world on fire." But what am I doing? Is there a girl in England, whoſe vanity is not a predominant paſſion? I ſwear, child, I believe you are an exception to the general rule; and that with youth, beauty, and good ſenſe, you poſſeſs not only modeſty, but diffidence; are not only free from envy, but rejoiced to find objects deſerving of praiſe.

You have shewn yourself at the play-house. Did you observe that more eyes were fixed on you, than on the inimitable Garrick? Pretty innocent! Do you imagine that beaus and belles go to the play to make observations on the actors, and the dramatic pieces? Nothing less, assure yourself; they go—"Some to admire, but "more to be admired."

A fine face attracts one, dress captivates another; but the ultimate happiness of your sex is to exert the tyranny of conquest.

What a rambling letter is this to send to a girl, who is a stranger to these arts, and whose joys are books and grave meditation. My dear girl, you should not indulge serious thoughts at your time of life! Suppose I were to shew your letters to some of our college bucks, what do you think they would say? A female philosopher! Defend us from petticoat innovators!

tors! Prithee, Villars! adviſe her to the ſtudies of the toilette. What have girls to do with reading and reflection? If ſhe has beauty, "Youth's the ſeaſon made "for joy."

Well, Flavia, I am actually tired! 'Tis not a very long letter neither, on turning it back. No, I muſt proceed and fill the ſheet; quantity you ſhall have, and for the quality you know your man, and will not be diſappointed. You muſt not expect me to be a conſtant correſpondent. A buſy time is approaching, and I am a good boy. I write once a fortnight to my *mama*. I am laughed at by my fellow collegians for my punctuality; but to my honour, I can tell you, their raillery paſſes thro' my ears like water thro' a ſieve.

My mother is ſurely angelic. If the time of her birth is not well atteſted, I muſt believe ſhe deſcended from the celeſtial regions, and for the good of erring

mortals, chose to wear the vesture of humanity.

I locked my door that I might not be disturbed, but some noisy intruder is knocking.——A rude *fellow*, I conjecture.

Well, child, it was a message from my tutor, who has given me a *rebation* for lodging out of college one night last week. I listened with great decorum, looked silly, twirled my thumbs, and had not a word to say.—He *is* a good man. He is my *mother's friend*.—'Twas a foolish frolic.—In company too with mad fellows whom I despise.—Yet one must live like the rest of the world.—If then there is a necessity for practising folly, what are the advantages of reason? This part of my letter will please you; but as the mercurial spirit begins to rise again, I will conclude with a serious truth, that I am, my dear girl,

Your's most affectionately,

FREDERICK VILLARS.

LETTER XV.

Miſs VILLARS to Mr. VILLARS.

WILL you not accuſe me of inſenſibility, my dear brother, when I tell you that your ſilence did not occaſion me a moment's uneaſineſs? I was convinced it did not proceed from want of affection. If I could have entertained a doubt of your friendſhip, I ſhould have been really unhappy, for it is impoſſible for a brother to be more beloved by a ſiſter.

The *rambling* part of your letter, as you call it, made me ſmile, but there is a paragraph that gave me uneaſineſs, that in which you mentioned the diſpleaſure of Mr. Spencer. It is ſuperfluous to add, *by an improper conduct*; for he is my *mother's* friend. Your own obſervation, my dear, convinces me that your's was an error of inadvertency only; but remember, that be-

ſides the preſervation of your own true honour, you are the *guardian* (if I may ſo expreſs myſelf) of my mother's happineſs. For *me*, my beloved brother, I intereſt myſelf moſt tenderly in your's. You rally my gravity. Indeed I cannot even aſſume the appearance of gayety without the awkwardneſs of affectation. I believe the tenderneſs of my heart ſometimes expoſes me to an exquiſite ſenſibility of ſuffering, from which a leſs ſuſceptible mind is exempted; yet I don't wiſh to poſſeſs that firmneſs which would alſo deprive me of my higheſt pleaſures.

I read the lively part of your letter to a gay young lady that viſits here frequently. Ay! cries ſhe, this is clever. This young fellow has proper notions.——Is this *your brother*, Villars? Upon my word you are not *his ſiſter*.—I thank you, Miſs Bridgewater, ſaid I; you mean to pay me a compliment I find.——Why I can't ſay I did, but

but you're not angry. We had ſome other ladies in company; one a married woman, chearful, talkative and inoffenſive. The other an elderly maiden lady who ſtill retains the title of *Miſs*. When they were gone, the lively Miſs Bridgewater exclaimed: *Miſs Glanville!* ſhe is certainly *miſcalled*. What a contraſt are theſe ladies! The converſation of the one is vitriol itſelf with all its corroding properties; as for the prattle of the other,

It rolls unheeded "like a river,
"That murm'ring flows and flows for ever."

A lady in company who approaches the ſeaſon of life to which Miſs Glanville is arrived, told Miſs Bridgewater, ſhe was ſurprized to hear her talk in ſuch a manner; that ſhe was certain Miſs Glanville was ſcarcely thirty; that ſome raw girls ridiculed their ſuperiors in wiſdom, becauſe the latter preferred the ſweets of independence to the cares of domeſtic life. That

men were odious creatures, and—Nay, my dear, interrupted Miſs Bridgewater, ſay no more; if a woman lives unmarried from choice ſhe need not *take pains* to convince the world of her wiſdom and happineſs; if otherwiſe, 'tis wrong to fib, you know, and to boaſt of *ſweets*, when the fruit of *Independence* is *ſour*. As to the *young* lady, I agree ſhe is *a-Miſs*.——None of your puns, Miſs Bridgewater, anſwered the angry lady, do you mean to affront me? *You*, Madam, retorted Miſs Bridgewater, I thought we were talking of Miſs Glanville. I muſt apply to you the words of a royal motto, Honi Soit qui Mal y penſe. The reference, which the lady did not underſtand, concluded the diſpute.

If this dialogue fail of contributing to your amuſement, I am convinced, my dear brother, that you are always pleaſed with my aſſurances of being

Your ever affectionate
Siſter and friend,
FLAVIA VILLARS.

LETTER XVI.

Miſs VILLARS to Mrs. VILLARS.

HOW delightful is it to have a parent from whom we are certain of receiving inſtruction. I thank you, dear madam, for your obſervations on the two plays, which will direct my future judgement.

Miſs Bridgewater was married yeſterday, and is gone for a few days into the country. I ſincerely wiſh her happy, and have hopes ſhe will be ſo.

Laſt week I attended lady Egerton and Mrs. Stamford to Covent Garden houſe, to hear the Oratorio of the Meſſiah. Good God! how it affected me! What heavenly ſounds! Handel had a ſoul tuned for harmony. I ſeemed exalted above mortality. Then he has choſen ſome of the moſt animated paſſages in Scripture; indeed 'tis almoſt too much for human nature to ſupport. This morning we heard the ſame delightful performance at the chapel of the

Found-

Foundling Hoſpital. This conſecrated place is certainly moſt proper for ſacred muſic, but the time of night it is perform'd at the Playhouſe, ſtrikes the mind with an awefully-pleaſing attention, which the objects the day preſents, rather diſſipate.

I have alſo had the pleaſure of being at the play of Tamerlane and the Careleſs Huſband. The character of Lady Eaſy delighted me, that of Lady Betty gave me ſome pleaſure, but excited in me more reſentment, that a woman ſo capable of communicating happineſs ſhould trifle with the uneaſineſs of a worthy man.

As to Tamerlane, ſurely there never was a more perfect character. Theſe are ſentiments that exalt the Monarch.

"Oh Axalla!
Could I forget I am a man as thou art,
Would not the winter's cold and ſummer's heat,
Sickneſs, or thirſt and hunger, all the train
Of Nature's clamorous appetites, aſſerting
An equal right in Kings and common Men,
Reprove me daily?—No! if I boaſt of aught,

Be

Be it to have been Heav'n's happy inſtrument,
The means of good to all my fellow creatures.
This is a King's beſt praiſe.

And again:

Oh! vain pretence to greatneſs! Like the Moon,
We borrow all our brightneſs which we boaſt;
Dark in ourſelves and uſeleſs.

And theſe:

Great minds (like Heav'n) are pleaſed with doing good,
Tho' the ungrateful ſubjects of their favours
Are barren in return."

Surely it muſt be impoſſible there could exiſt ſuch a wretch as Bajazet!——My heart was deeply affected with the ſufferings of Moneſes and Arpaſia, and exulted in the deliverance of Selima from her inhuman father. Pray, madam, ſend me your obſervations on theſe two plays.

I deſign'd to write a much longer letter, but Lady Egerton requeſts I will give her my company to an auction, and afterwards to pay a viſit. I muſt therefore, deareſt madam, bid you adieu! I am

Your ever dutiful daughter,

FLAVIA VILLARS.

LETTER XVII.

Mrs. VILLARS to Miss VILLARS.

MY dear girl's remarks on Tamerlane and the Careleſs Huſband pleaſe me very much, and I will give her my opinion of both as ſhe deſires.

You admire Lady Eaſy's conduct as a wife; ſo do I, but I blame her choice. Sir Charles uſed no artifice, ſhe ſays. He never *ſeemed* to be but what he *really was*. She praiſes his undeſigning honeſty, an honeſty ſcarcely praiſe-worthy, as it does not act in conſequence of knowing right from wrong. Her ſuſpicion of *ſmoother faces*, for which ſhe aſſigns no reaſon, is blameable; and her approbation of Sir Charles becauſe he took little pains to win her, is no proof either of her judgment or her prudence.

But if his affection for her before marriage, did not influence him to a conformity

mity of ſentiment or manners; was it probable the virtues of a *wife* ſhould effect a reformation in a man of his diſpoſition? An indifference to character can furniſh no rational hope of amendment; ſhe thought "ſuch a temper could never be deliberately "unkind:" perhaps not; becauſe he never acted from deliberation; but for a woman whoſe conduct was the reſult of principle, to ſay "ſhe knew that errors from want "of thinking might be borne at leaſt, "when probably a moment's thought "might end them," ſhews more her growing love, than any *ſolid* hope.

I think Sir Charles is a very improper character. Virtue when accompanied with ſweetneſs and complacency of manners, can ſurely never fail of exciting the eſteem and veneration of a libertine. But Sir Charles's injurious repreſentation of Lady Eaſy will influence an undiſtinguiſhing audience, and *his* contempt leſſen *their* admiration.

What

What an inſult does he offer, when he rallies her on the ſuppoſed want of power to keep her huſband to herſelf: being embarraſſed by her anſwer, he aſſerts that as a woman of principle ſhe *muſt* have pride, which, he ſays, *muſt* be the foundation of jealouſy. It is certain the conſciouſneſs of having performed the duty of a wife is her only reward, and I think ſhe had frequent reaſon to regret her improper choice, but none to accuſe herſelf of pride nor mean ſuſpicion. His unfeeling temerity, in daring to mention in jeſt, an injury of which he had been really guilty, muſt ſurprize and ſhock every ſuſceptible heart. When ſhe mildly tells him that if he proved unfaithful, "ſhe ſhould cry herſelf ſick in "ſome dark cloſet, and forget her tears when "he ſpoke kindly to her," he ſays, aſide, "The moſt convenient piece of virtue ſure "that wife was ever miſtreſs of." Can we form any expectation of her reclaiming

ſuch

such a man as this, who, instead of admiring her virtue, considers it only as a convenient disposition, which subjects him to no reproach for the indulgence of his vices. He forbids his mistress to insult his wife, that he may have the pleasure of insulting her himself.

When lady Easy leaves him, how lightly does he mention her! "Well! one way "or other this woman will certainly bring "about her business with me at last:" and what is the reason he assigns, because, "tho' he can't be happy with *her*, he shall "be weary of *other women*."

I don't like Lady Easy's excuse for him. "This excess of carelessness, to me, excuses "half his vices. If I can but once make "him think seriously —— Time may yet be "my friend." She could *reasonably* only expect, that fatigued with the pursuit of transitory pleasures, he might abandon vice when it no longer presented an aspect of

allurement. But how poor a ſubſtitute for the delights of virtue is the ſatiety of pleaſure! How ſhocking is it when the relinquiſhment of vice, does not proceed from a real preference of virtue! Sir Charles's ſoliloquy ſhews him capable of ſome reflection, and we might expect, in his ſerious moments, that he would do juſtice to the virtues of his wife, and feel ſome ſtings of remorſe: but quite the contrary; "I "am told, ſays he, that my wife is hand-"ſome, and that ſhe is the beſt woman "in the world: I don't know but ſhe "may, but I could never find her perſon "or good qualities gave *me* any concern. "In my eye, the woman has no more "charms than my mother."

And he boaſts to his friend, that he was the beſt huſband in the world, becauſe,—"his wife never found him out:" again, he lightly ſays to his friend, that if "ſhe "won't tell him his faults, how the deuce "ſhould

"should he mend them?" How does he join the trifling Lord Foppington in ridiculing the virtues of a wife, and say, "they are good for nothing but to make "her proud, and put the world in mind of "her husband's faults." The last proof Lady Easy gives him of her prudence and affection reclaims him. The consistency of her behaviour to him before this trial, and the tender fortitude she exerts in that arduous struggle, are truly exemplary. But from what instance of her conduct could he deduce this notion, that she was but of the foremost rank of that sex, amongst whom "he found so much of folly, pride, malice, "passion and irresolute desire?"——And whence could he conclude her to be "scarce "worthy his concern?" Even her unsuspecting confidence which he abused, conferred an obligation on him. "The severe "proof of her exalted virtue gave him a "wonder equal to his love." An unex-

pected conſequence after he had deſpiſed her good qualities, and been indifferent to her perſon. We can ſcarcely expect conſtancy of love, and permanence of eſteem from ſo unſettled a diſpoſition, even after this "ſevere proof of virtue;" and though I agree that

"Her wrongs when greateſt moſt her virtue prov'd;"

yet Sir Charles ſeems to be incapable of *true love*.

May no woman hazard making ſuch a choice from the hope of ſuch a reformation!—

The dialogue is genteel, and abounds with the true ſpirit of repartee. I need not give you *my* opinion of lady Betty Modiſh, as it exactly concurs with your's.

I am now obliged to reſign my pen till to-morrow.

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In compliance with my dear Flavia's requeſt, I will ſend her my obſervations on Tamerlane. You have remarked ſeveral paſ-

ſages

ſages which are expreſſive of *his* true greatneſs and *your* diſcernment. It is a character that exalts our ideas of human nature. I will take notice of a ſpeech of Tamerlane's which you have not mentioned. When he has defeated the Derviſe's wicked purpoſe, he ſays,

"Now learn the difference 'twixt thy faith and mine:
"Thine bids thee lift thy dagger to my throat;
"Mine can forgive the wrong, and bid thee live."

He adds:

"If thou continueſt ſtill to be the ſame,
"'Tis puniſhment enough to be a villain!"

It is an undoubted truth that vice is its own greateſt puniſhment, when the wicked have not loſt all power of reflection; but the ſame villainy that prompted the Derviſe's tongue to utter falſehood, and armed his hand againſt his Sovereign, might inſtigate him to the practice of ſome other crime, deſtructive of true religion, and the goodneſs of ſo-

ciety, if the perpetration afforded a proſpect of temporal advantages. Public utility then requires that ſome preſent puniſhment be appointed for criminals; but Chriſtian benevolence abhors the unnatural cuſtoms of offering human ſacrifices. It muſt be either a long ſeries of iniquity, or a miſtaken zeal for ſecuring the public ſafety authorized by eſtabliſhed laws, that can conquer the tender feelings of the ſoul, and induce a mortal Being to haſten the final diſſolution of a fellow creature!

When Tamerlane ſays,

"Look round how Providence beſtows alike,
"Sunſhine and rain to bleſs the fruitful year,
"On different nations, all of different faith:
"And (tho' by ſeveral names and titles worſhipp'd,)
"Heav'n takes the various tribute of their praiſe;
"Since all agree to *own*, at leaſt to *mean*,
"One beſt, one greateſt, only Lord of all:"

I agree with him;—but when he adds,

"Thus

"Thus when he view'd the many forms of Nature,
"He found that all were good, and bleſt the fair variety;"

I cannot acquieſce in this ſentiment. If the Deity "bleſt a fair variety," why did he promulgate the Chriſtian diſpenſation? Every perſon who acts in conformity with the light of Nature, we have reaſon to *hope*, is accepted by the ſupreme Being; but, the Chriſtian Religion affording the only *certain* aſſurance of future felicity as the reward of a well-ſpent life, the only promiſe of pardon upon repentance; Chriſtians ought not to be influenced by this opinion of Tamerlane, into a belief that every different faith is equally approved by Heaven.

Again he ſays,

"Religion's luſtre is by native innocence
"Divinely pure, and ſimple from all arts;
"You daub and dreſs her like a common miſtreſs,

"The harlot of your fancies; and by adding
"False beauties which she wants not, make the world
"Suspect her angel's face is foul beneath,
"And will not bear all lights."

The simile is not just either as it describes a harlot, or the religion of the Dervise. The harlot must have recourse to borrowed beauties; "her face will not bear all lights." The Dervise advises the destruction of the Christians. Is this the *false beauty* by which he decorates his Religion? It has not the *appearance* of beauty; and I know not why the angel face of the Christian Religion should be suspected of deceit, because the aspect of the Mahometan disgusts the beholder.

The character of Bajazet displays such enormity of wickedness, as encourages a benevolent hope, it was only the offspring of fancy to heighten by contrast the virtues of Tamerlane, for surely human nature

ture is incapable of such depravity.—The sufferings of Axalla and Selima, but more particularly of Moneses and Arpasia, deeply affect, whilst their virtues edify the heart. But Rowe has somewhat defeated his purpose of exciting pity, by the conduct of his plays. When the mind is labouring with the pangs of separation, perhaps a final one; is it natural for distress to dilate into a pompous flow of expression, to dictate a formal simile, or a measured rhyme? Thus Arpasia:

"Yes! my Moneses, now the surges rise,
"The swelling sea breaks in between our barks,
"And drives us to our fate on different rocks.

And Moneses:

"Death is parting;
"'Tis the last sad adieu 'twixt soul and body;
"But this is somewhat worse; my joy! my comfort!
"All that was left in life fleets after thee.

" My aching ſight hangs on thy parting beauties;
" Thy lovely eyes all drown'd in floods of ſorrow,

Then,

" So ſinks the ſetting ſun beneath the waves,
" And leaves the traveller in pathleſs woods,
" Benighted and forlorn: thus with ſad eyes,
" Weſtward he turns to mark the light's decay,
" Till having loſt the laſt faint glimpſe of day,
" Chearleſs in darkneſs he purſues his way."

I cou'd enumerate many other paſſages of this nature, but your own judgment will direct your obſervation of them. Nature is moſt eloquent when it is incapable of elegance. Shakeſpear and Maſon are inimitable maſters of the pathetic. The Caractacus and Elfrida of the latter, for the beauty of the images, the exalted and tender ſentiments have I think no equal.

I muſt now intreat my dear girl once more, to exert her own talents, and to examine

mine every opinion before she adopts it. You will ever find me, my Flavia, as much disposed to commend as to instruct; and I hope in every circumstance of life you will consider me as

Your truly affectionate mother,
and faithful friend,
SOPHIA VILLARS.

LETTER XVIII.

Miss VILLARS to Mrs. VILLARS.

I Thank you, dearest madam, for your last favour; I have perused it several times, and on each perusal am more confirmed in your opinion.

My gay friend, lady Maynwaring, is returned to London, as lively as ever; but she behaves better to sir Richard than I expected. The first day she waited on lady Egerton, the dining room was filled with company, and many persons were

with

with us who were not of lady Maynwaring's acquaintance. Equally free with all, the gay trifler reprimanded a gentleman whom ſhe had never ſeen before, for his *vulgariſms*. He attempted to defend his eloquence, but in terms utterly deſtructive of his pretenſions. Say no more, ſir, ſaid ſhe, ſay no more, I am *convinced*—that it is abſolutely impoſſible, continued ſhe, turning to me, to convince a fool of his folly. This is the *ſign* of the *urſa major*, as my brother ſays.

The gentleman did not overhear this whiſper, and I begged her to be careful not to offend any of lady Egerton's company. Soon after ſir Richard came and ſtood between our chairs, talking to me. Oh! Lord! Dicky, ſhe exclaimed, you make a total eclipſe, for here is the earth got between the ſun and the moon. Do you think, my dear, I am an improper emblem of the moon, "the inconſtant

"moon,"

"moon," as Juliet calls her. Pray, ſaid I, did not your ladyſhip tell me, you never loved reading? How your diſcourſe confutes your aſſertion!—Why, you muſt know, Villars, anſwered ſhe, whenever I was at home my brother was always reading to me, or making ſome ſage obſervations on what he did read. I can truly ſay, "he has ſat wearying his hearer."—Again! lady Maynwaring; you give me proofs of an attention you will not confeſs.

Yeſterday ſhe came flying up to my chamber, and ſeeing me writing, What! cry'd ſhe, is thy hand never without a pen, prithee? if thou can'ſt, lay it aſide. What ſignifies ſo much ſcribling? Lord! child, I was in company yeſterday with an *Author*, and ſuppoſed his converſation would have afforded the very pine-apple flavour of all the fruits of knowledge. I always expect *French wine* when I hear people

people talk of *claret*, but I have often met with vulgar *port* dignified by the name.

But my dear lady Maynwaring, ſaid I, would you not have called this author a pedantic coxcomb if he had deſcanted on any learned ſubject? Why, perhaps, anſwered ſhe, I might have called him a muzzy old fellow, who had dron'd ſo long amongſt fuſty books, he had no other ideas than they preſented. I think, added I, he ſhewed more good ſenſe and knowledge of the world by entering only into common chit chat, than if he had treated you with a learned diſſertation. Indeed, if the turn of converſation had given him a proper opportunity of diſplaying his ſuperior abilities, his ſilence might have been deemed affectation or contempt. How great muſt be the pleaſure of diſpenſing inſtruction! My God! exclaimed the gay lady, do you know who you are talking to? Peace, peace, girl, I like to hear my

own

own clack. Why, what a deal of flimſy ſtuff you have ſpun! However, don't be diſcouraged, Villars, my brother would have extolled this harangue, but he is an old fellow. On my life, child, thou art deſtined to recommend penitence to ſome mad wretch of a huſband, who will ſupply thee with ample matter for *preachment*.

Heaven forbid! lady Maynwaring; do you really think I ſhall be ſo weak as to make ſuch a choice? Oh! lord, my dear, men are ſome of them mere devils, but they can hide their cloven feet.—— But, pray, Villars, what old crone is that with lady Egerton? Her teeth, like Shakeſpear's apothecary's pots, are "thinly ſcatter'd to make up a row." What an odious ſneer! She has a lively humour—*in her face*; a moſt frightful perſonage. With a valuable mind I believe, ſaid I, at leaſt I judg'd ſo from the joy lady Egerton expreſs'd on ſeeing her.

But

But don't ridicule deformity of perſon, lady Maynwaring. I thought you had too much good ſenſe, and too good a heart to be guilty of that fault. Thank you, for your high opinion of me, which you now own I have little right to. Well! 'twas fooliſh prattle, but I do admire to hear ſuch a charming girl parade upon deformity.

A ſummons to tea interrupted lady Maynwaring. As I have no further particulars to relate, I will only add to this letter an aſſurance of ever being,

Deareſt madam,

Your dutiful affectionate daughter,

FLAVIA VILLARS.

LETTER XIX.

Miſs VILLARS to Mrs. VILLARS.

MY dear mother will be ſurprized to ſee a ſecond letter ſo ſoon after the receipt of my firſt, but I have been witneſs to a ſcene which has ſhocked me inexpreſſibly; and as I can't get it out of my mind, I determined to diſcloſe it to you, with the hope you will approve my conduct.

Oh! madam, the gay, the lively lady Maynwaring, has been attacked with a violent fever. She complained ſome days ago of a ſore throat, or rather ſhe ſlightly mentioned that it was *ruſty*, for *complaints* are not uſual with her. I adviſ'd her not to go upon the water to Greenwich, nor to be at the play that night. Sir Richard gave the ſame caution; but ſhe rallied our fears and diſregarded us. It ſeems ſhe encreaſed her cold upon the water; yet ſtill reſolute

reſolute to purſue her ſcheme of pleaſure (if it may be term'd ſo) ſhe went to the play, but was ſcarcely able to continue in the houſe during the performance. In the night ſhe was alarmed with an acute pain in her ſide, which was ſucceeded by a violent fever; ſhe ſent for me the next morning. I was aſtoniſhed on obſerving the change in her countenance. She had been blooded, but having frequent returns of the pain in her ſide, and the fever not abating, ſhe was judged to be in great danger.

She begged I would ſit down by her bedſide; and taking my hand, O! Miſs Villars, ſaid ſhe, you ſee me a very different creature from what I have been. The violence of this illneſs has awaken'd my reaſon; but, good God! what does it ſuggeſt to me? If this is a ſummons to eternity, what will become of me?

Her eyes looked wild, and her air diſtracted. She gazed on me with eager expectation,

pectation, but I was ſo ſhocked at this unexpected ſcene that it was ſeveral minutes before I could ſpeak. Ah! my dear, reſumed ſhe, if you could give me any conſolation, I know you would impart it. But tell me what you think? I confeſs, madam, my uneaſineſs has occaſioned my ſilence, but let me intreat you not to indulge melancholy apprehenſions. I hope you will enjoy many years of earthly happineſs. Yet, interrupted ſhe eagerly, if it ſhould not be ſo, if I have really but few hours to live, what can you then ſay to me of comfort?—If you be taken from us, ſaid I, why ſhould you deſpair of divine mercy? Your only fault has been inattention.—But inattention to what? anſwered ſhe;—to the *duties* of life, to the important end of my being. I have giddily trifled the time I ought to have improved, and I muſt give an account of it.

But, my dear lady Maynwaring, ſaid I, you can have no great errors to reflect upon.—My whole life, ſaid ſhe, has been a ſeries of diſſipation; pleaſure was my governing principle. What a review upon a death-bed! You are happy, my dear Miſs Villars. Reflection has no ſting for the virtuous.

The agony in which ſhe ſpoke, and her violent ſobs increaſed the pain in her ſide; I was ſo much alarmed that I ſummoned her nurſe and attendants; ſir Richard came up, and obſerving my diſorder from ſeeing her, inſiſted on my leaving the room. I ſtaid in the parlour till he inform'd me his lady was ſomewhat better, and appeared diſpoſed to ſleep. I took leave with a promiſe of calling the next morning. Accordingly I went yeſterday, and found lady Maynwaring much better. Her fever had left her, and ſhe felt very ſlight returns of the pain in her ſide. Her ſpirits appear'd much

much calmer; I ventured (ſeeing in her ſuch an amendment of health) to mention my hopes that ſhe would now have an opportunity of practiſing the reſolutions ſhe had made. She thanked me with a friendly air, but methought ſeemed to divert the converſation from the ſerious turn it had taken the day before. Lady Maynwaring told me, ſir Richard had received an invitation to viſit an old aunt at Cheſter, whoſe eſtate he expected to inherit, and that they ſhould ſet out as ſoon as ſhe was able to travel. She did not launch out into her uſual livelineſs, but I wanted to ſee her more grateful for returning health. Before we parted, I could not help recommending the duties of which ſhe had lamented the neglect; but, good God! I found it is ſometimes neceſſary we ſhould be deprived of bleſſings to inſpire us with a ſenſe of gratitude; and that the apprehenſions of impending death can

alone awaken the attention of the gay to the duties of life.

This morning I called again on lady Maynwaring: she was in her dressing room, intent upon some preparations for her journey. I again acted the part of a Monitor, and can only say, she *heard* me; the latter end of next week is the time fixed for her leaving town. Be so kind as to communicate to me your sentiments on the subjects of this letter. Believe me to be,

Dear and honoured madam,

Your most dutiful daughter,

FLAVIA VILLARS.

LETTER XX.

Mrs. VILLARS to Miss VILLARS.

MY DEAR CHILD,

YOUR last letter shocked and pleased me. Lady Maynwaring's situation excited

excited my compaſſion; your behaviour and obſervations, my higheſt approbation. We are moſt of us inſenſible to the real purpoſes of life, whilſt we poſſeſs its pleaſures. When a proſpect of futurity opens upon us, how many, like this thoughtleſs lady, ſtart with horror and apprehenſions! I intereſt myſelf in the happineſs of all my fellow creatures, and by you I intreat lady Maynwaring, never to recede from the determination ſhe formed in ſickneſs, for the ſame awful ſcene will again preſent itſelf, and muſt be ſucceeded by the dreaded event. I would not introduce ſuch grave reflections in my addreſs to ſo gay a lady, did I not fear ſhe is in danger of relapſing into follies which ſhe condemned in the hour of ſerious meditation. Tell her, my dear, ſhe will not fear death if ſhe learns to improve life; and that by performing every duty, ſhe will ſecure the moſt permanent enjoyment of every rational pleaſure.

For you, my dear girl, never content yourſelf with practiſing the externals of religion, but cheriſh a conſiſtent ſanctity of heart. Obſerve not only the laws of politeneſs, but purſue the dictates of chriſtian benevolence. You find by lady Maynwaring's confeſſion, that mere negative virtues are inſufficient to procure a heart-felt ſatisfaction. If we always acted from the conviction of being accountable beings whoſe diſſolution is certain, but whoſe *time* of probation is uncertain, we ſhould either prevent the riſe of evil, or hinder illaudable inclinations from producing bad habits.

Your grandmother has had a gouty attack, and is ſtill confined to her chamber; as her ſpirits are rather depreſt, I leave her as little as poſſible.

I am, my dear girl,

Your tenderly affectionate mother,

SOPHIA VILLARS.

LETTER XXI.

Miſs VILLARS to Mrs. VILLARS.

AS ſoon as I had read my deareſt mother's letter, I haſtened to lady Maynwaring, who is perfectly recovered, and has been abroad in her coach. I found her alone as I wiſhed, but dreſt for company, and with the bloom of health ſhe ſeems to have reſumed all her gaiety. Conſcious however, I ſuppoſe, that her late confeſſions would condemn her relapſe, I could perceive ſhe reſtrained ſome intended ſallies of mirth.

I wanted the converſation ſhould be of a ſerious caſt; but finding dreſs, her journey, and other unimportant matters engroſſed her attention, I entered on the ſubject of my errand. I beg'd ſhe would excuſe my taking the liberty of reminding her that ſhe had obligations to fulfil, which ſhe had owned had been hitherto neglected.

I then read to her your letter, which had the desired effect. She listened attentively, thanked me for interesting myself in her happiness, and intreated I would assure you of her resolution to be influenced by your wise precepts. Delighted with my success, I eagerly embraced her, when to my great mortification the servant threw open the door, and company appeared; I was shocked on observing the change in lady Maynwaring's countenance and manner. She was in a minute the giddy creature I had before seen her. I left the house as soon as politeness permitted. Lady Maynwaring made no efforts to detain me. I went to her again the next morning. I did not conceal my fears that she would dissipate in a round of company her good resolutions.

Why surely, child, said she, in her usual tone, you would not have me sit meditating, when I have invited people to

visit

visit me. I had better seclude myself at once.

No, madam, answered I; you know my mother advises no such severity of behaviour, but she would have your chearfulness rational; the natural effect of having performed your duty. Did not you bitterly lament in your illness that your whole business had been pleasure? I own to you, Miss Villars, said she, with a serious air, that since that dangerous crisis, when I am alone, and have leisure to reflect, I condemn my giddiness and make proper resolutions; but company succeeds to solitude, and folly conquers seriousness. I mix in the gay crowd and banish thought; I dare not promise, after the best intentions that I shall be able to keep them. Is it possible, said I, that a person of your good sense should be such a slave to pleasure? You who are so capable of relishing the charms of virtue? I protest, Miss Villars,

reply'd

reply'd lady Maynwaring, I am aſhamed of my folly. Give me a copy of that letter; I will read that and recollect my late apprehenſions before I go into company to preſerve me from infection, but don't depend upon me. I will ſend you a true account of myſelf from Cheſter; I hope it will be a *good* one.

Sir Richard's entrance prevented my anſwer. As they were to leave town the next day, I accompanied lady Egerton and Mrs. Stamford to wiſh them a good journey, but could only whiſper lady Maynwaring, that I hoped ſhe would remember her promiſe. She ſqueezed my hand, and aſſured me ſhe would not fail to *write*. Don't *rely* on me for any thing further, added ſhe.

Thus we parted. I ſometimes flatter myſelf ſhe will in time be perfectly amiable: I believe ſhe is friendly and generous, but ſo volatile, ſo unſteady, there is little dependance on her reſolutions.

To

To-morrow we are to go upon the water to Richmond, Twickenham, and ſome other places. You ſhall have an account of our excurſions in my next. I can truly aſſure you, madam, I have enjoy'd no pleaſure in London equal to that of receiving your letters, and of ſubſcribing myſelf, deareſt and ever honoured madam,

Your dutiful daughter,

FLAVIA VILLARS.

LETTER XXII.

Mr. VILLARS to Miſs VILLARS.

DEAR SISTER,

I SIT down with a pen in my hand, but without one ſingle idea in my head, and unleſs I may expatiate on that affection which glows in my heart towards you, I know not what to write. A college life is rather unfruitful in furniſhing epiſtolary

matter.

matter. I was about to ſay, its *regularity*, but I may make uſe of a more expreſſive term; its *uniformity* does not ſupply us with ſubjects of entertainment. But I have heard there is great art in writing upon nothing. Let me try if I can't fill a ſheet of paper by this art. Oh!——*Something* occurs tho' little better than nothing.——An old fellow of our college, yeſterday tir'd my patience with his repeated attacks upon a fine ſirloin of beef. I threw down my knife and fork in a pet, and taking out my pencil, ſcribbled theſe lines:

Voluptas with napkin tuck'd up to his chin,
Never waited for grace a repaſt to begin;
Pray, what place, cries Bellair, finiſh'd your education?
Eat on, my good friend, I'm upon the *foundation*.

Now I'm in the epigrammatic ſtrain, I'll tranſcribe another jingle I compoſed laſt week after being in company with a pretty Miſs Browne.

I have

I have often remark'd that ſome people delight

From mere contradiction to ſay black is white;
Uninſpir'd by that ſpirit, the world muſt declare
I ſpeak but the truth, when I ſay *Brown* is *fair*.

Will this ſtuff amuſe you, my dear? I have nothing *better* to ſend.——You, ſiſter, are very good in writing to me ſo frequently; but if any one aſk what you think of *me*, I doubt you will ſay I am a very indolent wretch. You are in the midſt of the gay world, and can't want my letters for amuſement: but are pleas'd with my ſcrawls, only becauſe they *are* mine, and that conſideration often encourages me to write without matter. Though I need not tell you your eyes may be better employed than in poring over my ſcribble.

You mention nothing of your conqueſts. Ah! Flavia, ſo much reſerve in ſo artleſs a mind! You are unconſcious of your power; is that the caſe? Amiable diffidence!

dence! I believe you really poſſeſs the quality of a meek and humble ſpirit, and indeed I can't mortify my ſelf-love ſo much as to imagine your ſilence on that ſubject, proceeds from a mean opinion of me. May I offer my advice? Your little heart is ſuſceptible of tenderneſs, I know it is, tho' it had not, when I left you, found an object deſerving of its ſofteſt attachment. Be cautious, my Flavia! men are ſtrange capricious animals. How many human ſavages have I obſerved ſlighting the affection they had aſſiduouſly ſought to engage! how many coquetting with every new beauty, while ſome tender female hearts have ſilently endur'd the torturing pangs of jealouſy and diſappointment! I have ſeen ſo much inconſtancy and ſenſuality among my own ſex, that I ſwear, child, I think ſuch a delicate, refined, tender diſpoſition as your's, has little probability of meeting with a fellow mind; and you would

would be the moſt miſerable woman in the world to be deceived in your choice. Perſonal or lucrative charms, my dear girl, are the magnets which attract the hearts of your modern *profeſſors* of love, and they are as ignorant of the paſſion they parade upon, as ſome of our profeſſors of abſtruſer arts and ſciences. As for the petit maitres, they are only the votaries of faſhion; and for the ladies whom I have obſerved, they are in general inconſiſtent in their conduct. They have the vanity of attributing to themſelves all the perfections which we flatter them with, yet ſo little confidence in the power of their charms, that they have recourſe to auxiliary aid, and borrow the bloom of a coſmetic. You, my ſweet ruſtic girl, glow with native beauty; health, innocence and modeſty ſhed their roſeate bluſhes upon your cheek. I hope no cruel reverſe of fortune will ever deaden theſe beauteous tints. The ſin-

cereſt wiſhes for your happineſs actuate my breaſt. Indeed, my dear, I love you moſt ſincerely. Will not you deem this long letter a proof of my regard? Upon my word, this exuberance of epiſtolary goodneſs leſſens my humility. Do not ſay I want to gain credit only to contract new debts. I have acknowledged you to be my ſuperior in punctuality, owned it to my mother, who I know was too well convinced before how much you ſoar above me in every reſpect. Well, ſiſter, what will you call this proſaic, poetic, audacious epiſtle? A miſcellaneous collection, or a medley? Call my letter what you pleaſe, and think me a whimſical mortal, but always believe me to be

Your ſincerely affectionate brother,

FR. VILLARS.

LETTER XXIII.

Lady EGERTON to Mrs. VILLARS.

IT is a painful task, my dear Mrs. Villars, to convey unwelcome tidings, but tho' painful it is sometimes the office of friendship. I have only doubts and fears to impart, yet even these ought not to be concealed from so tender a parent. I am apprehensive Miss Villars's affections are engaged. She has, I doubt, been too grateful, and bestowed her heart in return for her life. This is the sum of my information. We went one day last week on the water to Richmond, &c. several gentlemen and ladies of our party, and amongst the rest captain Welmore, a man whose sweetness of manners and insinuating address render him a very agreeable companion. His fine person, and perhaps his profession contribute to his being a favourite with the Ladies. As we were returning home, a great number of boats were passing and

repaſſing. Two well dreſt men, in one of them, betray'd their having been engaged in a frolic, and to keep up the ſpirit of it, they inſiſted on managing the oars. They were by no means equal to the undertaking; but ſteered in ſo uncertain a manner, that they at laſt ran their boat violently againſt ours. Miſs Villars had ſtarted up on ſeeing them near us, and the ſhock our boat received threw her into the water. The reſt were only frightened by this attack, and our attention to our own danger was called off by ſeeing Miſs Villars's ſituation. Captain Welmore, who ſat next her, caught hold of her gown, but could not prevent her from ſinking. He then threw himſelf into the river, and ſoon carried her to ſhore. We all went into an houſe one of the watermen recommended, till a coach could be called. Miſs Villars ſhewed, for ſome time, no ſigns of life; but, after having diſcharged a large

quantity

quantity of water, ſhe opened her eyes, and appeared much revived. She was put to bed immediately after getting home, and had a tolerable night. The next morning ſhe came down after breakfaſt, and own'd no further inconvenience from the accident than faintneſs and tremor. Captain Welmore came to enquire how ſhe did, and I could perceive a bluſh overſpread Miſs Villars's cheek, which I then only attributed to a grateful modeſty. She returned him her acknowledgements with a graceful air, but with a timid heſitation. He ſtaid about half an hour, and Miſs Villars withdrew ſoon after his departure. We had engaged ourſelves for the next day to dinner with a lady of quality. As Miſs Villars declined the viſit, Mrs. Stamford offered to ſend her excuſes, but your daughter inſiſted on her fulfilling the engagement. We both determined not to

ſpend the evening. Accordingly we returned early, and on aſking the ſervant how Miſs Villars did, were anſwered, Pretty well, and that Captain Welmore had juſt left her. This information rather ſtartled me. He had heard of our viſit, and I feared had ſome deſign in chuſing this tete a tete conference. I imparted my ſuſpicions to my daughter, and deſir'd ſhe would act in concert with me, that I might inform you of every alarming circumſtance. She promiſed me, and we went up to the dining room. Miſs Villars did not expect us ſo ſoon. She ſat leaning upon a table with a book open before her. She ſtarted on ſeeing us, and I found ſhe had been weeping. Sighs, which ſhe endeavour'd to ſuppreſs, eſcaped from a viſibly-oppreſſed heart.

I aſked Miſs Villars if ſhe had been alone. She told me Captain Welmore had called, and the repetition of his name occaſioned

caſioned an unuſual emotion. I could not forbear telling her my apprehenſions. My dear Miſs Villars, ſaid I, you are convinc'd, I hope, of my ſincere friendſhip for your mama and you. I own, I am fearful that Captain Welmore has made an impreſſion on your heart; his paying this viſit when he knew we were to be abſent, gives riſe to my ſuſpicions.

Miſs Villars's tears now flowed very faſt. I took her hand, Mrs. Stamford leaned over the chair, and reclined her face againſt Miſs Villars's cheek. You almoſt change my doubts into certainty, continued I; tell me, my ſweet girl, what has happened. You know, your mama has reſigned for a time her guardianſhip to me. I muſt not betray the precious truſt. Captain Welmore is an handſome and an agreeable man; but we are ignorant of his real diſpoſition and circumſtances.

Miſs Villars's ſobs interrupted me, and ſhe intreated with ſo much earneſtneſs that I would permit her to retire, that I dared not detain her, leſt the agitation of her mind ſhould be too powerful in her weak ſtate. My daughter went up with her, but would not renew the ſubject. This morning I was ſhocked on obſerving the redneſs of her eyes, and the paleneſs of her checks. She ſeems to be very uneaſy, but I can't draw from her a confeſſion of the cauſe. She only anſwers me with tears, ſighs, and evaſions. Captain Welmore called this morning. He is going out of town with Lord * * * * * to ſtay at that nobleman's ſeat, which is a hundred miles diſtant, ſome weeks. He came in as Miſs Villars was leaving me. She only made him a courteſy and retir'd.

What do you think, dear madam, from theſe circumſtances? I aſſure you I never obſerv'd before this affair, that Captain Welmore ſhewed more attention to Miſs Villars,

Villars, than every man of his age pays to a beautiful young lady, eſpecially where politeneſs is the uſual tribute of his profeſſion.—My ſon-in-law gives Captain Welmore the character of a good-natur'd ſenſible man; but their acquaintance has been of no long date, and has not produced any great intimacy.

You may depend on my care of Miſs Villars, and obſervance of your advice; for I have an entire reliance on your judgment, and love you and her ſo much that I have an intereſt in the happineſs of both. Indeed, I think it to be morally impoſſible, that children of ſuch a parent ſhould be either deficient in virtue or in prudence; yet ſometimes unaccountable events deſtroy our fondeſt expectations.

I am, dear Mrs. Villars, with the moſt perfect eſteem,

Your ſincerely faithful,
and much obliged
E. EGERTON.

LETTER XXIV.

Mrs. VILLARS to Lady EGERTON.

DEAR MADAM,

MY heart feels the tendereſt ſympathy in my child's affliction, and the deepeſt ſenſe of gratitude for your ladyſhip's goodneſs. Pardon me if I *intreat* a continuance of your care. I would immediately haſten to town, but as the Captain is abſent, I think my letters may more effectually reſtore my dear girl's tranquillity than my preſence. To ſend for her down might precipitate her conduct. If it is in my power to contribute to her real happineſs, ſhe ſhall be happy. My children are my treaſure, and divide my heart.——My ſweet Flavia! love is a paſſion that will determine the happineſs or miſery of thy future life. Ah! madam, how little ought we *to depend* on the *ſucceſs* of even our beſt endeavours! But could we always inſure

to

to ourſelves the events we wiſh to promote, the duties of patience, reſignation and acquieſcence in the will of Heaven, could not be exerted. It is certainly more reaſonable to *hope*, that a religious education ſhould have a proper effect on a perſon's conduct, than that a neglected, uncultivated mind ſhould produce the fruits of virtue; but even good principles are not always a ſecurity from deviation, when violent temptations aſſail: theſe principles however will ſoon influence an offender to a return of duty, and inſpire a ſtricter attention to prevent future errors. On the behaviour of a parent in theſe and ſimilar circumſtances, a child's reformation or reprobation greatly depend. I will do *my duty* to my children, not only to preſerve the moſt delightful conſciouſneſs, but as the beſt means of recommending to them the practice of their's. If, notwithſtanding my utmoſt care, they remain uninfluenced,

fluenced, ſubmiſſion to the will of Heaven can alone ſecure my *eternal* felicity, after reſigning all expectation of *temporal* happineſs.

My child demands my pen; I cannot delay ſo important a ſubject 'till another poſt, and my time is greatly appropriated to my mother, who is ſtill confined with the gout.

My beſt reſpects wait on your ladyſhip and family, and my acknowledgements are alſo due to Mrs. Stamford for her kindneſs to my daughter.

Believe me to be, dear madam,

Your ladyſhip's moſt grateful

and affectionate humble ſervant,

SOPHIA VILLARS.

LETTER XXV.

Mrs. VILLARS to Miſs VILLARS.

MY DEAR CHILD,

I AM ſo well convinced of your regard for me, that I do not deem your want of confidence any proof of want of affection. Lady Egerton, with the tenderneſs of a parent, has hinted to me fears, which you can either diſſipate or confirm. Be not afraid, my Flavia, of diſcloſing to me the ſecrets of your heart. I am no rigid judge, whoſe ſeverity might alarm you. It is not a mother void of ſenſibility, and forgetful of the tender paſſion, who invites your confidence, but a ſympathizing friend, who has felt the moſt lively, conſtant affection for the worthieſt of his ſex, and who acknowledges, that a reciprocal, well-founded paſſion is a ſource of the moſt perfect temporal happineſs.

A wedded

A wedded life was to me a ſtate of bliſs; alas! how tranſitory the enjoyment! Can you think, my dear child, that a tender wife can prove an inflexible, unfeeling mother? *My* heart feels the anguiſh of *yours*; but do not indulge a melancholy which endangers your health, and gives uneaſineſs to your friends. I ſhall expect your anſwer with an impatience equal to my love. If you are conſcious of a breach in duty, repair it by an unreſerved confeſſion. Depend on the mildeſt interpretation of your behaviour, and the moſt lively attention to your happineſs, from

Your ever affectionate mother,

SOPHIA VILLARS.

LETTER XXVI.

Miſs VILLARS to Mrs. VILLARS.

I Never till now took up my pen with unwillingneſs to write to my deareſt mother.

mother. Oh! madam, what can I ſay in extenuation of my fault? With ſuch a parent, reſerve was unpardonable, and my precipitate engagement criminal. I own my error, and yet dare to aſk for your approbation of my choice; a choice which ſhould have received that ſanction, before I imparted the tender ſentiment of my heart. Perhaps my affections were ſomewhat enſnared before the ſad accident, and gratitude to the preſerver of my life, confirmed the paſſion. I will confeſs all my weakneſs.

Captain Welmore called upon me in lady Egerton's abſence; he own'd his love, ſigh'd at my feet, wept, ſwore, and intreated that I would give him my promiſe never to be another's. My manner of receiving his addreſs, encouraged him no doubt to make this propoſal. What *could* I do, my dear mother? or rather what *did* I do? My heart yielded to his intreaties, but

but I could not ſpeak. I extended my hand to raiſe him, but he would not riſe till I gave him hope. He mentioned his long abſence, urged it as a plea for his importunity. I felt its force, I own'd my love; I did more, I promiſed never to marry another while he was unmarried, and wiſhed me to be his. At the ſame time I told him, I would never marry without your conſent. His joy on this conceſſion, was inexpreſſible, and the pleaſure it give me to ſee him happy ſuſpended my reflections. But when he was gone, the remembrance of my promiſe tormented me with apprehenſions that you would diſapprove my conduct. I could not acquit myſelf of precipitance, and yet my heart was ſo deeply attached that I found my happineſs depended on gaining your conſent. My tears then flowed abundantly, for I indulged them, not expecting the return of my friends; I determined to be

in

in bed before they came home; but lady Egerton and Mrs. Stamford, too tenderly officious, ſurprized me by their entrance. They perceived my uneaſineſs, and the former kindly enquired the reaſon. I could not anſwer; it was not perverſeneſs, but ſhame and contrition that kept me ſilent. Your goodneſs, my dear mother, emboldens me to confeſs my fault, and yet it condemns me more ſeverely than reproaches. Ah! madam, will you conſent to our happineſs? I think you *muſt* approve my choice: captain Welmore ſeems to poſſeſs great ſweetneſs of diſpoſition. He has good ſenſe, and is reſpected by all his acquaintance.

My heart anxiouſly pines for your forgiveneſs. I have offended, but love is an involuntary paſſion, and in every other reſpect be aſſured I will ever be,

Deareſt madam,

Your dutiful daughter,

FLAVIA VILLARS.

LETTER XXVII.

Mrs. VILLARS to Miss VILLARS.

MY DEAR CHILD!

YOU implore my forgiveneſs, you acknowledge your fault, and you intreat my conſent to your happineſs. But have you convinced me it is in the power of captain Welmore to make you happy? No, my Flavia, your love inſpires your confidence of his merit. Can you aſſure me that this love does not veil many imperfections from your obſervation? Is he really the amiable character you portray, or are you deceived by paſſion into an opinion that he has every good quality? He ſeems, you ſay, to poſſeſs ſweetneſs of diſpoſition. Ah! my dear, men are not always what they *ſeem* to be: he was deſirous of pleaſing you, and he has ſucceeded. His looks, perhaps you will tell

me,

me, cannot be deceitful. How often have I known a placid ſoftneſs aſſumed as a maſk for public appearance only; the reſult not of *good nature* but of *good humour*, but which an impartial obſerver alone could diſtinguiſh. It is the private, the domeſtic character that ſhews the genuine diſpoſition. Has he performed the duties of a ſon, a brother, and a friend? Or, if we conſider him in a public capacity, has he been the votary of true honour? Is he not a ſlave to the faſhionable vices of his profeſſion? Is not the *name* of love, and all the vocabulary of flames and darts, the common ſubject of all his interviews with the fair ſex? The military gentlemen are by no means remarkable for their conſtancy. They in general poſſeſs qualities to render themſelves agreeable, but do not cultivate thoſe which would make them valuable. Confident of ſucceſs, every fair one receives their unmeaning tribute; and

their place of abode being as unsettled as their principles, is it not a weakness to subject ourselves to such precarious and dangerous circumstances? Do not imagine I exaggerate the matter. This is a picture drawn by general observation from the life.

I will now suppose the captain possessed of every requisite for happiness, and that his heart is as constant and tender as your own; yet consider, my dear girl, the uncertainty of a soldier's situation. You probably must either be parted from him or torn from the bosom of an affectionate parent, must be exposed (perhaps in a condition most distressful) to the inconveniencies of travelling, to the dangers of the sea, and the hazard from change of climate. If you have a family, you must either resign the "delightful task of rearing the tender "mind," or you must render them liable to a participation in your dangers and fatigues.

fatigues. Oh! my child, conſider the anguiſh you would feel in parting from your huſband, when his duty calls him to the defence of his country. Should he fall, how complicated would be your diſtreſs; left to mourn not only your own, but your children's loſs in his death, and with them to encounter farther difficulties. A Roman wife, when her huſband died in the bed of honour, would account her tears a glorious tribute to his memory; but *your* heart, my dear child, is not caſt in that patriotic mould. It is more tenderly humanized, and cannot diveſt itſelf of private affections, for the ſake of public advantage. Beſides, you can no more anſwer for a ſoldier's conduct, than for your own power of ſupporting with becoming fortitude the ſudden death of a beloved huſband.——Theſe are circumſtances to which lovers are inattentive, but which it is the duty of a parent to repreſent in the

light she views them. I have not mentioned fortune, a consideration frequently too prevalent with the parent, and too little regarded by the child. A competence is an indispensibly necessary ingredient in marriage, and we ought to have the means of providing for future contingencies. How dreadful would it be to see the object of your tenderest affection involved in difficulties which your participation would not alleviate—but increase; or who can tell that misfortunes will not occasion an alteration in his temper fatal to your peace?

I inclose a composition written by me on the parting of General T—— from lady F——. If I have painted her distress in an affecting manner, consider the picture as a representation of the evils to which you would render yourself liable. Your confidence in me, my dear girl, relieves some part of my fears. A secret

engage-

engagement endangers your peace, your honour, and your reputation; beſides, that it is a breach of duty to a parent. Conſider the alternative you have given me; either to make you miſerable by a refuſal, or to conſent without a reaſonable motive for my acquieſcence in your choice. I promiſe you, my Flavia, if the captain is worthy of you, if your affections are unalterably fixed, and your fortunes will afford you an eaſy ſubſiſtence, I ſhall not object to your marriage.

I intreat to know the reſult of your conſideration after you have conſulted your friends, whoſe goodneſs merits your confidence. Mrs. Stamford can by her huſband's means diſcover the captain's real character. If he is unworthy, though you have promiſed never to change your condition whilſt he is unmarried, and your lover, yet you will be happier in your preſent ſtate of life than you can be with

a man of bad principles or conduct. I cannot acquit you of imprudence, but I will endeavour to leſſen the evil I cannot recall.

Whatever is the ſettled wiſh of your heart, after deliberate conſideration, and your friends impartial intelligence, ſhall be complied with by

Your ever affectionate mother,

SOPHIA VILLARS.

[Incloſed in the foregoing.]

MARCIA to PUBLIUS.

SINCE then thy country calls, and thou wilt go
To diſtant climes to meet a ſavage foe;
Oh! Publius, guard with care thy precious life,
Nor in the dearer huſband wound the wife!
Fain would I ſtop th' o'erflowings of my heart,
But nature breaks the weak reſolves of art.
Can honour's breath recall thy fleeting ghoſt?
Can Britain's weal atone for Publius loſt?

Many

Many in honour's paths delight to rove
Who feel no pleadings of connubial love.
Can honour bid thee break the tender tye
Of gentle love and ſoft humanity?
When infant weakneſs ſeeks a friend in thee,
Can'ſt thou, O Publius! leave thy ſons and me?
A patriot ſpirit has thy ſoul engroſt,
And in the ſoldier is the huſband loſt!—
But muſt diſhonour blaſt thy ſpotleſs fame,
If love aſſert, or nature urge its claim?
Go then, my lord, nor heed a woman's fear,
Whoſe fond affection prompts th' unwilling tear.
Thou ne'er ſhalt ſay the weakneſs of thy wife
Made thee prefer a vile inglorious life
To honour's cauſe.—Ah! no, thou ſhalt not ſtay.
Yet—muſt my lord the harſh decree obey?
Methinks I hear the thund'ring cannons roar,
Or view thee wreck'd and treadleſs on the ſhore;

A thouſand dangers wake my anxious fears;
A thouſand ſhapes the ghaſtly ſpectre wears,
Now lurks in ambuſh, now in front appears,
Or in Diſeaſe's dire inſidious art
Attacks the noble fortreſs of the heart;
No beam of joy irradiates gloomy care,
Ev'n hope is overcaſt by black deſpair!
Oh let me tempt thee from th' embattled field,
Be our defence, our refuge, and our ſhield!
Come, my lov'd lord! my deareſt huſband, come!
Thy Marcia calls thee to thy native home!
When weary'd nature ſinks in ſoft repoſe,
And dewy ſleep my fearful eye-lids cloſe,
Excurſive fancy paints thy mimic ſhade,
The peaceful olive on thy ſhield diſplay'd,
Thy brows encircled with a laurel crown,
Whilſt peace and conqueſt hail their darling ſon!
But waking ſenſe the glowing traits deſtroy,
And real anguiſh mocks th' illuſive joy!
No ſeas divide us yet, no dangers riſe,
Bleſs then, O Publius! bleſs theſe longing eyes!

Thy

Thy weeping children chide their ſire's delay;
Why goes, they cry, my father hence away?
Their tender prattle but augments my grief,
They ſee my tears, and ſtrive t' impart relief,
They ſeize my hands, and dew them with their tears;
That ſight new-points my woes, creates new fears.
Can no fond plea engage thy quick return?
Muſt wretched love, the force of honour mourn?
Tyrannic glory! arbitrary ſway!
Muſt the fond parent, huſband, friend obey?
He muſt, he muſt, and all I aſk is vain;
Adieu then, ever deareſt, beſt of men!
May'ſt thou in ſafety bleſs theſe eyes again!
I only meant to write a laſt farewell,
To breathe the ſorrow time can ne'er diſpel!
I can no more—ſuch anguiſh wrings my heart,
A long farewell!—My ſoul's far better part!

LETTER XXVIII.

Mr. VILLARS to Mrs. VILLARS.

I WAS never ſo much aſtoniſhed, deareſt madam, as yeſterday; when being in our walks with a captain Moxly, lately come to Oxford, he aſked me if I had not a ſiſter at lady Egerton's in Groſvenor-ſquare; and when I told him I had, Well then, ſaid he, I can aſſure you you'll ſoon be ſummoned to a wedding, for to my certain knowledge ſhe has given her promiſe to be captain Welmore's wife. My ſurprize was inexpreſſible: I aſſured him he muſt be miſtaken, but he aſſerted it ſtrongly; told me a long cock and a bull ſtory of Flavia's falling into the Thames, and that he was of the party to Richmond, &c. Then he launched forth in rhapſodical praiſes of my ſiſter's charms, and with a military air, declared ſhe was the

fineſt girl he had ever ſeen, and that he envy'd Welmore's ſucceſs. 'Twas his perſon and addreſs, continued he, that captivated her heart. As to the captain's fortune, 'tis all in his pocket I believe.

Some of my fellow collegians join'd us, and I ſoon quitted the walks. If this account be true, and I think it muſt be fact, what ſhall I ſay of this prudiſh, imprudent girl? What precipitate folly! Surely gravity is generally a veil to lightneſs and indiſcretion. But I'll ſay no more to ſo good a judge of what is right and proper, than that I hope my dear mother will now think me entitled to ſhare an equal degree of her affection with my ſiſter.

I have now, madam, to addreſs you on another ſubject, to aſk your advice about a profeſſion. I am dubious.—Sometimes I incline to the red coat, ſometimes I have a propenſity to the black. Law I deteſt,

'tis

'tis too dry and ſevere a ſtudy for me; and when I conſider the many cauſes in which our moſt eminent pleaders are obliged to ſupport injuſtice by the forms of law, and to baniſh reaſon and equity for the *name* of juſtice, I am confirmed in my diſlike. Phyſic is fit only for grey beards. A young fellow can't put on ſapience with his wig. A ſtarch'd phiz is a grimace I can't aſſume. It would ſit as aukwardly upon me, as the cane upon my button hole. Well then, the church or the army. You, madam, ſhall determine for me. Nay, if you give the preference to law, or phyſic, I know your opinion will be founded on, and ſupported by reaſon.

I ſubmit myſelf to your deciſion, and am, dear and honoured madam,

Your ever dutiful ſon,

FREDERICK VILLARS.

LETTER XXIX.

Mrs. VILLARS to Mr. VILLARS.

DEAR SON,

YOUR ſurprize on hearing the officer's information, ſcarcely equalled my concern, when I read your unkind remarks on your ſiſter's behaviour; whilſt I blame her imprudence, I muſt do juſtice to the goodneſs of her heart. A mild and gentle diſpoſition is moſt ſuſceptive of the tender paſſion. She was betrayed into inadvertency by a love which took its riſe from gratitude. Had ſhe poſſeſſed leſs ſoftneſs, or been actuated by a ſpark of coquetry, perhaps ſhe had not entered into this precipitate engagement. Then, inſtead of being deceived by the profeſſions of another, ſhe would have practiſed and been at laſt the dupe of her own artifice. She *has* acted improperly. Juſtice demands this

this confeſſion, but charity diſpoſes me to aſſign the moſt favourable motives for the actions of all my fellow creatures. Is not maternal affection an additional plea for my forgiveneſs of the only error of a beloved child? I cannot recall the paſt. I am only accountable for any neglect of my own to promote the happineſs of the offender. I may avert the *conſequences* of an action I could not prevent. Can I ſupplicate at the throne of mercy for a pardon which I have not extended to the infirmities of others? When divine goodneſs is ever prone to ſave, ſhall human weakneſs dare to condemn without mercy? Is fraternal love entirely baniſhed from your boſom? Can you envy a ſiſter the ſhare ſhe poſſeſſes in the affection of a mother? My heart is equally divided between my children. Believe me, my ſon, it is not by depreciating your ſiſter's merit nor exaggerating her fault, that you can

heighten

heighten my love and eſteem for you. If you wiſh to preſerve them, recall that tenderneſs for Flavia, which will influence you to excuſe in her the frailties incident to humanity. To boaſt your own ſuperiority derogates from it. I believe the conduct of both will henceforth gratify my wiſhes, and *you* need not be apprehenſive of my ſuperior fondneſs for your ſiſter whilſt you continue to be deſerving, and are kind to her.

Your general reflections on gravity are injudicious, and ſhew more of petulance than obſervation. Becauſe your ſiſter has been imprudent, muſt the ſerious character be ſuſpected? Her error was no conſequence of her gravity, nor any impeachment of real prudence, which is the concomitant, or rather an eſſential part of virtue.

I will now anſwer your requeſt. I have no reaſons for recommending a profeſſion for

for which you have no inclination; yet the livelineſs of your diſpoſition makes me apprehenſive, that your preference of the church to law and phyſic, is not the effect of real deſire for the ſacred function, but that it is in conſequence of the living in my gift. But as I never told you I intended it for you, ſo I aſſure you I always determined never to beſtow it upon you, unleſs I had a moral conviction that this profeſſion was your unbiaſſed choice. You will ſay no perſon would chuſe that ſituation in life which was not likely to ſupply its conveniencies; and I grant, that it is natural to conſider a temporal proviſion as well as ſpiritual advantage; but ſhall the temporal proviſion be the *ſole* or principal inducement in fixing our choice, and abſorb the important intereſt of life? Leſt worldly conſiderations ſhould biaſs you, and to fulfil my promiſe to a friend, I will impart to you lord B****'s generous

offer.

offer. He was under obligation to your dear father, you know; and in return he desired me, if ever you expreſt any propenſity to a military life, to acquaint you that he would give you the command of a company. He added, that as this profeſſion was not likely to be *my* choice for you, he intreated I would keep his deſign a ſecret unleſs you hinted a wiſh for the army. I have acquitted myſelf of the enjoined information, and if your preference of the church was only incited by the proſpect of a living, you have now a counterbalance. If the army is your choice, remember, the proper buſineſs of an officer is not dreſs and gallantry, but an unwearied aſſiduity in ſupporting the rights of his king and country, and preſerving order and regularity amongſt his ſoldiers; that as his ſtation expoſes him continually to danger, ſo it is incumbent on him to ſubdue the fear of death, by

performing the purpoſes of life. He ſhould equally avoid raſhneſs and cowardice. He muſt never ſeparate his idea of a man of true honour, from that of a ſincere chriſtian. I refer you to Maſon's Caractacus, where Arviragus ſays,

"Give me courage
That knows not rage; revenge that knows not malice.
Let me not thirſt for carnage, but for conqueſt;
And conqueſt gain'd, ſleep vengeance in my breaſt
Ere in its ſheath my ſword."

Whatever profeſſion you chuſe, let your choice be founded on the moſt laudable motives. Whether you determine for the church or army, I muſt inſiſt on your giving a probationary aſſurance that your choice is the reſult of good principles. You ought not to accept lord B***'s kind gift, without teſtifying ſome proof of your deſert, by ſerving as a volunteer; and as for

for the living in my diſpoſal, I will never beſtow it on any perſon who has not conſcientiouſly diſcharged the duties of the ſacred function. When affluent circumſtances permit any man to reſign *all* pecuniary advantage for the defence of his country, it is generous to ſupport ſuch a ſpirit of patriotiſm; but, if after having given convincing teſtimonies of the ſincerity of his profeſſion, by nobly hazarding life for the public ſafety, a perſon not bleſt with the goods of fortune, accepts a lucrative reward for military ſervices, who can blame him, when to every trade and profeſſion ſome worldly advantage is annexed? By a faithful diſcharge of the duties of the ſituation you prefer, you acquire a right to its temporal privileges: "The labourer "is worthy of his hire." Ever ſince the earlieſt ages, the promulgators of chriſtianity have been appointed a lucrative fruit of their labours in the church.

I ſhall readily acquieſce in your ſerious determination; for I am, my dear ſon,

Your moſt affectionate mother,

SOPHIA VILLARS.

LETTER XXX.

Mr. SPENCER to Mrs. VILLARS.

MADAM,

I SHOULD not properly diſcharge the office you entruſted me with, if I concealed from you the danger to which your ſon is expoſed. Your piety will enable you to ſupport my information with fortitude, and your ſuperior judgment dictate to you the moſt likely means of redreſs.

Mr. Villars has, it ſeems, for ſome time frequented a ſociety of *free thinkers*, as they call themſelves; free *livers* and infidels, are more ſignificant appellations. A friend of mine, who came this week to Oxford, and is acquainted with one of the fraternity,

nity, was on Tueſday night admitted into their club, but being ſoon diſguſted, left them and came to me. After repeating ſome of the converſation, he expreſſed a particular concern that Mr. Villars, whom he had ſeen with me, was amongſt the company. My ſurprize was great, for though I had heard ſome inſtances of his reliſh for pleaſure, yet as he ſeemed properly affected by my remonſtrances, I had no reaſon to fear he was vicious from principle. I inſtantly ſent for him, and told him what I had heard. He owned the charge. I aſked him how he could defend himſelf to you; he ſighed, and anſwered, he had only deſerted principles which ſeemed to him founded on prejudice, for ſuch opinions as appeared certain and incontrovertible. I would ſend you the whole of our conference, but I think it would be better you ſhould have the riſe and progreſs of his deviation from himſelf. I have flattering

hopes of his converſion, when evidence drawn from the fountain of truth flow from your pen with all the graces of elocution. The unſuſpecting goodneſs of his heart, and the remarkable ſweetneſs of his diſpoſition, have contributed to his deluſion. He finds he is the idol of all ſocieties, and he has not reſolution to combat any pernicious tenet, however contrary to his deliberate opinion.

I ſhall not conceal from him the ſubſtance of this letter. I am, madam, with repeated aſſurances of my care and good wiſhes,

Your moſt faithful,
and obedient humble ſervant,
H. SPENCER.

LETTER XXXI.

Mrs. VILLARS to Mr. SPENCER.

SIR,

YOUR letter gave me a ſhock that deprived me of my ſenſes: for ſome time I ſunk into a ſtate of inſenſibility, but when I recovered, I ſummoned to my aid all the powers of reaſon and religion, and find my hopes revive. I hope the Deity will ſupply me with irreſiſtible arguments to reſtore my unhappy ſon. When my children were with me, I never conſidered my own care ſufficient for their preſervation, but implored for them the protection of the Almighty, who has permitted my child to be deluded by falſe principles; but I hope a conviction of his error will ſecure him unſhaken in the truth.

I find by your letter, ſir, that he had not been altogether faultleſs before this ſad

deviation. I thank you for your kind remonſtrances. He ſeemed affected by them, you ſay; perhaps my ignorance of his folly was beſt for both, ſince I could ſcarcely have been ſilent, and frequent reproof might have fatigued him and endeared his pleaſures.—I need not *intreat* you, ſir, to be watchful over him. Be ſo good as to acquaint me, when he perſiſts in any error; but, as youth is impatient of controul, and my ſon's diſpoſition, though petulant, is truly generous, you will increaſe his attachment to your perſon, and obſervance of your admonitions, rather by a confidence in him, than by ſhewing any ſuſpicion of his future behaviour. I have a juſt ſenſe of your lively attention to my ſon's true intereſt; and am, ſir, with real eſteem,

Your obliged humble ſervant,

SOPHIA VILLARS.

LETTER XXXII.

Mr. VILLARS to Mrs. VILLARS.

MR. Spencer has told me that he has complained of me to my dear mother, and I fear her heart condemns my deviation from the principles I imbibed from her.

I will confeſs to *you*, madam, that my reaſon is puzzled, but not convinced, and that though I have forſaken the *prejudices* (as they appeared to me) of youth, and adopted ſuch opinions as ſeem perfectly conſonant to nature; yet, when I quit the ſociety of my free-thinking companions, I find myſelf in an uneaſy doubtful ſtate. You wiſh, I am ſure, to know the tenets of theſe gentlemen. Some even diſbelieve the being of a God, and center all enjoyment in the pleaſures of ſenſe; others make

make a jeſt of revelation and a future ſtate, and call all religion prieſt-craft. Some of my friends, indeed, act on a more ſublime principle. They conſider virtue as its own reward, and deny a future recompence, the hope of which they call an intereſted motive of action. But the ſublimity of this doctrine is leſs captivating to youthful minds, than the opinion that the pleaſures of ſenſe are the only purpoſes of life. The gay gentlemen laughed at my ſcruples, ridiculed the prejudices of education, and maintained that the ſoul is corruptible and diſſoluble as the body. They tell me that the notion of a God is an improbable and irrational ſuppoſition; that it is inconſiſtent to imagine a ſuperintending power, who permits vice to triumph, and virtue to ſuffer.

What reaſon, ſay they, have we for the belief that there is ſuch a Being, whom we

we never ſaw nor can have any idea of?—To *me*, madam, I muſt own it is matter of aſtoniſhment, that a Being, who could foreſee the frailty of man, did not create him incapable of error. Indeed, it may now be ſaid, we are mere paſſive agents; for, "if there's a Power above us," we can act only as the Deity impels us, and may charge him with our miſtakes.—My companions tell me that revelation is ſupported only upon the evidence of weak enthuſiaſts; who, though they reſiſted to death, were under the influence either of madneſs or obſtinacy.

You will be ſurprized, my dear mother, that with theſe ſentiments I aſked your advice about the *church* or army. I will ingenuouſly confeſs my purpoſe; I have not the leaſt propenſity for the latter, though with my opinions I cannot be a ſincere votary to the former. I would

not

not mention the church only, fearing you ſhould diſcover the motive, which was (to own the truth) the poſſeſſion of the living. I hoped *you* would recommend the church after I had given this alternative. This ſcheme, however, was projected by my friends, and I felt a remorſe after my compliance, which their gaiety ſoon diſſipated. Before I knew this ſet, my inclinations ſtrongly inclined me to holy orders, but the new light they placed things in, gave me a diſreliſh for the profeſſion. When I firſt told them of the living in your gift, they adviſ'd me to a ſale of it, and to live like a gentleman. I was too well acquainted with your ſentiments to ſuppoſe you would ſell your right of preſentation. I had, indeed, often heard you blame ſuch indiſcriminate proceedings, and the beſtowing ſpiritual endowments for temporal conſiderations.—When theſe

gentlemen

gentlemen found my worldly intereſt connected with the ſpiritual profeſſion, they adviſed me to lay aſide all ſcruples, and to accept any means of enjoying life. I did at laſt conſent, but on calm reflection could not acquit my conſcience.

I know, madam, you ſhudder at my condition, but do not abſolutely condemn me. I act in conformity with my belief, but I am not happy; perhaps 'tis in your power to convince my reaſon: my *inclinations* are fluctuating.

I am, honoured madam,

Your dutiful ſon,

FREDERICK VILLARS.

LETTER XXXIII.

Mrs. VILLARS to Mr. VILLARS.

YOUR change of ſentiment, my dear ſon, in the moſt important article of life, gave me an inexpreſſible ſhock; but the confidence you have repoſed in me, and the impatience with which you expect my anſwer, ſupport my hopes that you are not incorrigibly bent on your own deſtruction. I have addreſſed myſelf with fervour to the Supreme Being for inſtruction in the means to effect your converſion.

"Do not condemn me," you ſay; "I "act in conformity with my belief." My dear child, you deceive yourſelf. Your belief is a conſequence of faulty actions. Pleaſure firſt deluded you, and you wiſhed to reconcile your principles with your practices. Thus you became ſuſceptible of bad impreſſions. Vicious habits gave riſe

riſe to incredulity with regard to the moſt evident and eſſential truths. From *wiſhes* that there might be no God to puniſh vice, you were eaſily perſuaded into a *belief* that there is none. Surely it is impoſſible a perſon who thinks, can deny the being of a God. The Pſalmiſt hath pronounced, that "the fool hath ſaid in his heart, There "is no God;" and the Apoſtle, that "the "wiſdom of the world is fooliſhneſs with "God."

"What reaſon, you ſay, can we have to "believe the exiſtence of a Being we never "ſaw, nor can form an idea of?" Tell me, my ſon, how we can form any idea of our own ſouls, but from their operations? The body is only an unanimated maſs, incapable of motion, without the influence of an enlivening principle. By the ſame manner that we trace the ſoul in the actions of the body; we may be certain of the exiſtence of a Supreme Being, from the

the larger operations of the univerſe. Indeed every object around us is a proof of a Deity, "in whom we live, move, and have "our being." Every perception of our ſenſes is impreſſed by the wiſdom of the Almighty. He converſes with human beings by the intervention of ſenſible objects. By a viſual language he declares his own exiſtence.

Why do you ſubmit your faith to the ſuggeſtions of the worldling, or the ſenſualiſt, who will not allow themſelves ſufficient attention for the inveſtigation of truth? If it were even impoſſible to attain a *demonſtration* of a God, and future ſtate, yet remember what your favourite Socrates ſays; "If there *be no* future *ſtate*, "I ſhall ſuffer nothing, and I *now* rejoice "in Hope; if there be, I ſhall *be* happy."

You are alſo aſtoniſhed, you ſay, "that "an Omniſcient Being who could foreſee "the frailty of man, did not create him incapable

" incapable of error ;" yet you add, " If " there's a power above us, we are now " mere paſſive agents, for we can act only " as the Deity impels us." Here you *complain* of being *paſſive* ; in the former caſe you *deſire* to be ſo ; but you do not wiſh to *deſerve* the eternal rewards of virtue. Why do you accuſe the Almighty of your errors ? God's preſcience does not deſtroy our free will.

" God made us perfect, not immutable,
" Sufficient to have ſtood, tho' free to fall ;
" No: free, what proof could they have giv'n,
" ſincere
" Of true allegiance, conſtant faith, or love,
" Where only what they needs *muſt do*, appear'd,
" Not what they *would*.—If God foreknew,
" Foreknowledge had no influence on their fault,
" Which had no leſs prov'd certain, unforeknown."

It is now in your power by obedience to inherit eternal bliſs. Why do you then deſire impoſſibilities? For a created, muſt be an accountable being. If you remain inactive, becauſe your actions cannot alter ſupreme decrees, you are certain, that for theſe very omiſſions of duty, you muſt be inevitably doomed by the decrees of God to miſery.

You argue againſt the notion of a Supreme Being, becauſe virtue ſuffers, and vice is triumphant; but when you talk in this manner, remember you muſt exclude externals, which may be rendered good or evil by our uſe or abuſe of them. The ingenious Mr. Harris defines the *ſovereign good* to be *ſelf-derived*, durable and indeprivable, and *accommodate to all times and places.* He demonſtrates the inſufficiency of ambitious purſuits, of lucrative views, of pleaſures, and of a contemplative life. His firſt concluſion is, that the ſovereign good

conſiſts

conſiſts "in *attaining* the primary and juſt "requiſites of our nature by a conduct "ſuitable to virtue." But this definition he finds to be inconſiſtent with human uncertainty, "for the ſame event happens to "the righteous and the wicked." This leads to other conſiderations, and the reſult is, he determines the ſovereign good to lie in rectitude of conduct; and that this good correſponds with all his preconceptions of being *ſelf-derived*, *durable* and *indeprivable*. But beſides, that he makes this only an hypotheſis, he aſſerts, that this conſcious rectitude is all-ſufficient; and inſtances Epicurus, and others, the *motive* of whoſe actions appeared laudable to themſelves. When he mentions Socrates, he attributes his fortitude in ſuffering ſolely to the ſufficiency of virtue, which ought to be referred to an higher ſource; for Socrates *firmly believed* a future ſtate, though he had not received the promiſes contained in re-

velation. That there have been many perſons who have reſigned life rather than betray their country, merely from the ſpirit of patriotiſm, is an undoubted truth; but can we agree with this ingenious author, that "if theſe moral and divine habits *be* our "intereſt, we need not ſeek for a better?" I have an intereſt, he ſays, *compatible* with the ſpot on which I live; but will he reſign an intereſt in "that inheritance which fadeth not away?" Without adding the hope of a future retribution, this excellent writer's ſyſtem is imperfect. His plan naturally tends to excite our expectations, that he will trace the *ſovereign good* to its pureſt ſource, and ſhew that we derive our happineſs from our hope of a future ſtate, which we owe to revelation; for without that we can form no rational and conſiſtent hope of acceptance with the Almighty. Believe me, my child, true religion is the only real ſecurity for happineſs, and chriſtianity

tianity is the only true religion. I will ſoon reſume this ſubject in another letter, being unable to add more now, than that I am,

My dear ſon,

Your ever affectionate mother,

SOPHIA VILLARS.

LETTER XXXIV.

Mrs. VILLARS to Mr. VILLARS.

MY DEAR SON,

THE more I conſider the cauſe of your error, the more I am convinc'd that you deceive yourſelf in the ſuppoſition that you were convinced by the *reaſonings* of your companions. If your inclinations had not been previouſly engaged on the ſide of pleaſure, I ſhould not have feared your being entangled in the thin web of ſophiſtical argument. You diſbelieve revelation. Amazing! that a perſon ſo in-

credulous in a belief of importance to salvation, the belief of a revelation corroborated by every circumſtance which can awaken conviction, ſhould yield aſſent to the unſupported aſſertions of a few intereſted pleaders. Chriſtianity is the true intereſt of every individual. What! becauſe revelation is agreeable to natural reaſon; ſhall ſome immediately imagine the latter alone ſufficient; not conſidering that we derive our rays of light from revelation, and ought not to aſcribe them to natural reaſon.

Shall we be leſs powerfully incited to godlineſs, becauſe it has the promiſe of a future reward? Or ſhall we be leſs prone to vice, when we are freed from the dread of future puniſhment? We purſue thoſe means which promiſe us temporal gratifications, and ſhall we diſdain to ſupport by our actions a well founded hope of heavenly felicity? What further proof of the

truth

truth of revelation can you require than has been often given? Our Saviour's doctrines are as pure as his life: "Never man ſpake "like this man." The conſiſtency of his precepts with the real happineſs of human kind, inclined many to think they muſt come from God, and a chain of miracles confirmed the truth of his divine miſſion. "No man can do theſe miracles which "thou doſt, except God be with him." God would never permit evil ſpirits to work miracles, which would deceive mankind to their irreparable injury. To accuſe of enthuſiaſm our Saviour and his Apoſtles, proves either the weakneſs of the accuſers' heads, or the turpitude of their hearts; for beſides, that the conſiſtency of their doctrines and examples evince their incontrovertible truth; enthuſiaſts would have been incapable of the actual performance of miracles, though they might have *ſuppoſed* themſelves capable of per-

forming them.—It has been objected, that the Apoſtles' belief in our Saviour was an enthuſiaſtic confidence, and that many perſons have reſigned life in a wrong cauſe. How was it poſſible there could be any impoſition on their ſenſes? If there was, that muſt have been in itſelf a miracle. Could they mean to deceive others? They had no proſpect of temporal advantage. On the contrary, St. Paul ſays, "If "in this life only we had hope in Chriſt, "*we*" (who devoted themſelves at that time to his ſervice) "are of all men moſt mi- "ſerable." They were convinced, by the teſtimony of their ſenſes, of the truth of our Saviour's miracles before his ſufferings, and afterwards of his reſurrection and aſcenſion. Even the traitor Judas, who betrayed him, could not alledge a ſingle argument to diſprove his divine commiſſion; and thoſe likewiſe, who dared to raiſe an unjuſt report after his reſurrection, did not attempt to puniſh the men whom they

accuſed

accuſed of ſtealing his body, and found their malice ineffectual to rouſe the popular clamour.

It has indeed been urged, that Chriſt's reſurrection would have been much more indubitable if he had appeared to the chief prieſts and the people. But nothing can be more weak than this objection. For they muſt either have ſtill diſbelieved Chriſt's reſurrection, which would have weakened the diſciples' evidence, or they *would* have believed on him. But even the teſtimony of his enemies, if you could have been convinced of his reſurrection, muſt be leſs ſatisfactory to future enquirers after truth than that of his diſciples and followers, who were moſt acquainted with him, and could moſt eaſily recognize their maſter on his appearance after his reſurrection. Had the chief prieſts believed, it might have been called a ſtate trick, a mere political invention to confirm the truth of the Meſ-

ſiah,

ſiah, of whom they had long expreſſed an expectation; a fraud might eaſily have been carried on, which would have ſuited the prejudices of the people, (Deiſts might then have urged) and if diſcover'd, none would have dared to expoſe it in oppoſition to the whole ſtate; and ſuppoſing no fraud, modern Infidels have no ſtronger motive of conviction on theſe additional evidences. The diſciples would not then have hazarded perſecutions and martrydom, which circumſtances are the ſtrongeſt corroborations of their belief in Chriſt, and the truth of their evidence.——The time would not have come, propheſied by our Saviour, when "Whoſoever killed his diſciples "would think he did God ſervice." "In "the world, ſays he, ye ſhall have tribula-"tion;" but on the foregoing ſuppoſition from whence was it to ariſe?——

The veracity of the apoſtles is proved not only by the tendency of their precepts,

and the excellence of their lives, but from the ſilence of their inveterate enemies, and the teſtimony of ſucceeding writers. They did not reſign their lives in the madneſs of enthuſiaſm, but in the rational ſupport of the chriſtian doctrines. They were "faithful unto death, and had "the hope of receiving the crown of life." Let me add, that the benefits of chriſtianity extend to all mankind who act in conformity with their belief: I hope its doctrines will enlighten all thoſe who now "ſit in darkneſs." If you are yet unſatisfied of all the truth of a religion, that has flouriſhed in deſpite of the oppoſitions of ignorance, I adviſe you to a re-peruſal of the Minute Philoſopher; Dr. Clarke on natural and revealed religion; Lyttelton on St. Paul's Converſion; Weſt on the Reſurrection, and particularly the New Teſtament. The more you examine Scripture, the ſtronger will be your aſſurance of its truth.

Do

Do not read ſuperficially, nor fatigue yourſelf by an unremitted attention, but ſet apart ſome time every day for theſe important ſubjects, and reflect on what you read.

I do not aſk you, my dear child, to anſwer theſe letters immediately. Conſider what I have writen, and how you ought to think and act. I have not endeavour'd to recommend mere ſpeculative tenets, but to exhort you to a belief that will animate your practice of every chriſtian duty. To inſpire you with ſuch a truſt and confidence in God's promiſes, as will bring forth the fruits of an holy and religious life. This is the Chriſtian's ſaving faith. I will conclude my letter with two examples which will enforce what I have I ſaid.

Mr. Johnſon (whom you knew) reſted his whole conduct on the all-ſufficiency and ſublimity of virtue, and deſpiſed revelation. He perſevered in the opinion for twenty

twenty years. He then felt the oppreſſion of misfortune. He received an offer of redreſs by means incompatible with virtue. What could he do? He had no hope of future retribution, to recompence his acquieſcence in the impending ſuffering. His happineſs depended on the preſent moment. The alternative was, a ſacrifice of virtue, or a reſignation of the pleaſures of a life, which he believed comprehended his being. If this life was the whole of his exiſtence, it would have been folly to have reſigned its delights on any conſideration. He then gave up the principle, which he found inſufficient to conſtitute happineſs. Pleaſure became the governing directreſs of his actions. He gratified every inordinate wiſh, he indulged every luxuriant thought. Yet happineſs ſtill flitted before him, and ſoared above his purſuit. In the height of his intemperance he was attacked with a violent illneſs, and his mind laboured

laboured with apprehenſions of futurity. The idea of an avenging God, whoſe Being he had denied, haunted him with inceſſant terrors. His companions rallied his puſillanimity, but found themſelves infected with the contagion of his deſpair, and were incapable of affording him any conſolation. They ſaw the partaker of their riot and debauchery, an early victim to intemperance. How joyfully would he have indulged the hope of annihilation, to be releaſed from the torturing fears of endleſs miſery; but the proſpect of death preſented to his affrighted ſoul the certainty of future retribution. Sometimes, in an agony of deſpondency, he upbraided the Divine Author of his being, and imprecated horrible execrations againſt his companions in libertiniſm; at others, he attempted to ſupplicate for mercy at the throne of heaven; but no ray of hope could irradiate the gloom of deſpondency. He had

deſpiſed

deſpiſed that Being, to whom in diſtreſs he applied for forgiveneſs; he had neglected the means of ſalvation, and dared not to rely upon divine goodneſs. Though labouring under the moſt excruciating pains of body; with what earneſtneſs did he wiſh to prolong the date even of corporeal ſuffering, that he might atone for paſt tranſgreſſions, and be ſaved from eternal torments. But his temporal miſery ſoon arrived at its completion, and he expired in agonies too dreadful for deſcription, and of which the moſt gloomy imagination can ſcarcely form an exaggerated idea.

How different from theſe were the laſt moments of the beſt of men, my huſband, and your father! Never can time efface the ſadly-pleaſing remembrance! His illneſs you know was a fever, which occaſioned a galloping conſumption. He was ſenſible of approaching death, and ſhewed the becoming reſignation of a Chriſtian. I will

repeat

repeat to you his laſt words, that you may be convinced, "the ſting of death is ſin," and may obſerve the different manner in which this awful circumſtance affects the Libertine and the Chriſtian.

My deareſt Sophia, ſaid he, taking my hand; the reſignation with which I ſubmit to the appointment of Heaven might appear to ſome perſons only an indifference to this life; but your goodneſs can never ſuſpect me of inſenſibility to its bleſſings. I only feel for you; but, my deareſt wife, I intreat you by all the motives Chriſtianity ſuggeſts, to conquer the violence of your affliction.—I cannot wiſh you ſhould forget me, but I truly pray to the Almighty, that you may not preſerve my remembrance to diſturb your future tranquillity. Your virtues will compenſate for my loſs, to my children. Thoſe exalted virtues will alſo direct your future choice; and it is my earneſt requeſt, a requeſt the reſult of deliberation,

liberation, that you will not devote yourſelf to my memory, if you be addreſſed by a perſon whoſe merit claims a right to the ineſtimable treaſure of your heart.

Here he ſtopt——I threw myſelf on my knees by his bed-ſide, but had not power to ſpeak.

With the utmoſt fortitude he ſupported the pangs of death. He breathed no murmur of diſcontent: he neither wiſhed to haſten nor delay the deciſive moment. You ſee my deareſt, ſaid he, about an hour before he breathed his laſt, the fear of death is only *natural* to the ſinner. The Chriſtian knows he cannot die. I leave you in the protection of the Almighty. He will be a father to the fatherleſs, and a benefactor to the widow. I ſubmit to the divine will, and yet to bid you a long adieu is almoſt too much for human nature to ſupport;—but we ſhall meet, never to part again!

With what tenderneſs did he embrace us! It is not to be expreſſed.——I can only add, that his death was as truly meritorious as his life was exemplary. This ſubject is ſo affecting that I muſt for a few minutes lay aſide my pen.

LETTER XXXV.

I have often deſired, and I now repeat my requeſt, that you would place a entire confidence in me. Why are you ſo unwilling to treat me as a friend? Have I ever excited your fear by an undue exertion of maternal authority? I hope ſuch a confidence as I propoſe would be a reſtraint on every irregular propenſity, and that your promiſe and duty to me may be additional tyes to ſecure your attention to your true intereſt. If paſſion plead the cauſe of pleaſure, reflect on the brevity of human life, and the eternal duration of future felicity. My heart expands with hope. Be aſſured, my dear, that the proſelyte ſon will reſtore the happineſs of

His tenderly affectionate mother,

SOPHIA VILLARS.

LETTER XXXV.

The Rev. Mr. STANLEY, to Mrs. VILLARS.

MADAM,

I AM credibly informed that Mr. Williams lies at the point of death, and hope you will have no objection to my succeeding him in the rectory of G*****, till your son is of age to be inducted into it. My family is numerous and increasing; this circumstance will, I flatter myself, be a strong recommendation to so benevolent a disposition. You may depend on my care of the parishioners, and that they shall suffer no improper exertion of my power. I make no doubt you will pardon my impatience for your answer, and believe you will not think me presumptuous in indulging expectations of success.

I am, madam,

Your most obedient

humble servant,

JOHN STANLEY

LETTER XXXVI.

Mrs. VILLARS to Mr. STANLEY.

SIR,

MR. Williams is really in a dangerous ſtate, yet ſuch as does not threaten a ſudden diſſolution: I would on no account make a promiſe to any one during the life of an incumbent; but, if this gentleman was actually deceaſed, I could not tranſfer a living to a perſon who (pardon, ſir, a freedom you have incurred) has *no* recommendation on which to found a reaſonable hope. A *numerous* and *increaſing family* with a ſmall proviſion, are certainly powerful incitements to a parent's endeavours for their maintenance. But theſe circumſtances *only*, though they have a claim to our pity and aſſiſtance, are no recommendation to any *office*. He who wiſhes to *receive*, ſhould firſt *deſerve* a benefit. An honeſt heart, though accompanied with a weak head, has a better

claim to such a presentation, than the finest abilities without a proper application. Yet, I acknowledge the preference due to these *united* qualifications.

I could never think even of repaying an obligation by conferring an *unmerited gift*. A mere promise of your care of my parish, cannot obliterate the remembrance of your negligence of domestic and social duties. I must act conformably to *my character*, and wish *you* had supported the dignity of *your sacred function*.

It is a matter of real concern to me, that your conduct affords no motive for my compliance with your request. If it is in my power to be serviceable to your family, consistently with my principles, you may depend on the readiness with which I will prove myself to be

Their and your sincere friend,

SOPHIA VILLARS.

LETTER XXXVII.

SIR HENRY MOUNTENEY to Mrs. VILLARS.

MADAM,

TO tell you that I have long felt the highest esteem for your virtues, is only expressing the sentiments of an admiring world; but, may I be permitted to mention a particular attachment to your person, and shall I be forgiven, if I breathe a presumptuous hope that you will reward my passion? My situation in life gives me a right to please myself, and my utmost wish will be gratified, if I have the happiness of pleasing you. My estate is clear 3000*l. per annum*. I will assign to your immediate use 500*l.* a year, and settle upon you and your children the whole of my estate in case of your survivorship. I should have made an earlier declaration of my love, had I not been engaged in a trou-

troubleſome law-ſuit, which is lately decided in my favour. With what impatience I waited the iſſue of it, you can only imagine if you do juſtice to the violence of my paſſion. Though I have been married, I have never taſted the ſweets of a conjugal union. With you, madam, if I am ſo happy as to be agreeable to you, I ſhall experience the moſt perfect human felicity. Permit me to add, that it was not *my* fault lady Mounteney was not happy.

Whatever alterations you like to make in my manner of life, every thing you deſire, will in conſequence become my choice.

I hope you will gratify my impatience by an immediate anſwer. Lady Egerton intereſts herſelf for me, but would not ſend a letter in my favour, as you know my character, and your judgment, ſhe ſays, is infallible.

Be assured, madam, there never was a purer, more sincere regard, than that which actuates the breast of

Your faithfully devoted servant,

HENRY MOUNTENEY.

LETTER XXXVIII.

Mrs. VILLARS to Sir HENRY MOUNTENEY.

SIR,

THE disinterested affection you profess for me, demands my earliest acknowledgments; and I will be as explicit as you can desire. The settlements you propose to make, infinitely exceed my merit and desires; and, indeed I must take the liberty to add I think no woman with any share of the virtues you ascribe to me, could acquiesce in the terms you offered, though your love represents this action in a different light. You have no

children,

children, but you have near relations, who may reasonably hope to find you their friend. I have no other motive, sir, for this advice than the desire of influencing you to acts of justice: I must entirely decline the honour you would do me. *I have* tasted the sweets of a conjugal union, and *experienced* the most perfect human felicity. I am, and ever shall be, too much devoted to my husband's memory, to enter into a matrimonial contract with another.—My children are endeared to me still more by being the living representatives of their father, and claim all those proofs of tenderness which were once divided between the conjugal and maternal objects of love.

Your character, sir, engaged my esteem, and your behaviour at the Bath confirmed what I had heard; but I can never feel the love you would, as a husband, have a right to expect, for any other than Mr.

Villars.

Villars. You may possibly wish me to be your's, in the hope of obtaining by your tenderness the affection you would inspire; but after having enjoyed the happiness that flows from reciprocal love, I cannot resign my hand where I cannot *promise* to give my heart.

My children will have a genteel sufficiency for every rational purpose of life, and no accession of fortune can be for their advantage, which is procured by injustice. Excuse, sir, a repetition which may have the appearance of ingratitude; but you have deviated by this proposal from *your* character, and the concurrence you request would be incompatible with *mine*. My son and daughter love me as a friend, whilst they revere me as a parent; we have no separate interests, nor would they accept any acquisition that was obtained by the sacrifice of my peace.

I do not make it the constant subject of discourse, that I intend never to marry, because

because such a conduct might render that determination suspected, which is not the less firm for being concealed, when there is no occasion to discover it.

I shall take it as a favour, sir, if you importune me no further, for my refusal is the result of deliberation; I shall always retain a just sense of your merit, and of the regard you express for me; and am, sir,

Your sincere friend,
and humble servant,
SOPHIA VILLARS.

LETTER XXXIX.

MRS. VILLARS to lady EGERTON.

DEAR MADAM,

SIR Henry Mounteney has informed me that you interest yourself in his favour. I esteem your silence on this subject as an additional proof of your friendship. I take

the

the liberty of inclosing my answer to sir Henry in this letter, that your ladyship may read my settled purpose, and I shall only add on this subject, that my disposition is tender, perhaps even to a too exquisite degree of sensibility, and that no man who possessed a less delicate observant tenderness than I experienced from Mr. Villars, could render me happy. Love suggested to *me* a thousand little attentions, which mere duty might fail to inspire, and which sir Henry's affection would give him a right to expect. As to my children, I cannot consent to hazard their subjection to a father in law. Sir Henry Mounteney's appearance and character, seem to indicate a friendly and generous mind; but appearances are sometimes deceitful, and my children might forfeit a certain happiness by my dependence on precarious events. You will read my opinion of his pecuniary offers.—If sir Henry mentions

any

any further application to me, do me the favour, madam, to convince him it would be unsuccessful.

I am impatient for a letter from my daughter: what can be the occasion of her continued silence? If she had been prevented from writing by illness, and if any other interesting circumstance had occurred since her last letter, your ladyship would have acquainted me with it. I shall depend on a line from you or my child in a few posts.

I am, madam, with unfeigned regard,

your ladyship's most affectionate

humble servant,

SOPHIA MILLARS.

LETTER XL.

Miss VILLARS to Mrs. VILLARS.

IN the agony of distress, I venture to implore advice and consolation from my dearest mother. Oh! madam, I deferred writing, because I have been revolving over and over the subject of your letter; or rather, to be perfectly ingenuous, I indulged a fond delusive hope, that captain Welmore would convince me of his inviolable attachment, and settle my fluctuating thoughts. But no letter arrived; every post my heart has fluttered with expectation, and every post I have been disappointed! He has been absent more than a month: I was chagrined, but more uneasy. What an addition to my misery, was the intelligence I received yesterday! I was told that captain Welmore was returned to town. Joyful information! But this only heightened the

shock,

ſhock, for it was immediately added, that the honourable miſs D——, ſiſter to lord D——, who has a fortune of 20,000*l.* at her own diſpoſal, is determined to beſtow it with herſelf upon my faithleſs lover. She accompanied her brother to London, to purchaſe wedding cloaths; and to compleat my misfortune, by giving her hand to captain Welmore. I ſhuddered on hearing the ſhocking tale. Lady Egerton, who perceived a change in my countenance, diverted the company's attention from me, by complaining of a giddineſs in her head. While the ladies were employed about her, I left the room; Mrs. Stamford followed, and found me fainting. My ſpirits had been ſo much agitated, that I was for ſome time inſenſible of my misfortune. But I have now recovered ſenſe enough to feel all my wretchedneſs. Good God! can there be no dependence on the heart of man?—What

ſhall

ſhall I do! Shall I upbraid him with perfidy, or ſhall I reſign him without reminding him of his breach of promiſe? Can *he* be lawfully the huſband of another, who has vowed to be only mine? Can *I* be acceſſary to ſuch a deception on the young lady? Ah! madam, it is for her temporal intereſt, and to prevent his eternal miſery, that I would divulge his inconſtancy. I own that love ſtill pleads for him in my heart. Had I been able to have offered him the gifts of fortune, I ſhould not have been abandoned.—Perhaps he loves me,—perhaps he fluctuates—Ah! no, if he felt the power of love, he would not ſurely heſitate what choice to make!

Lady Egerton and Mrs. Stamford pity my diſtreſs, and adviſe me to take no ſtep without your expreſs inſtructions or concurrence. You will not let me linger in miſery. Oh! remember, my dear mother,

that

that my future happineſs depends on the event of this affair. I muſt ſubſcribe myſelf,

Your unhappy daughter,

FLAVIA VILLARS.

LETTER XLI.

Mrs. VILLARS to Miſs VILLARS.

MY DEAR CHILD,

I SIT down immediately after the peruſal of your letter to anſwer it. I ſympathize in your uneaſineſs, but I am not inconſolable, for I foreſee it will be leſs permanent than you imagine. I beg of you, my love, to take no meaſures for preventing the intended marriage. "He "is engaged by prior vows to you, and "cannot, you ſay, lawfully be the huſ- "band of another." Ah! my Flavia, had he entered into no engagement, before he profeſſed himſelf *your* lover? How

many times may he have been perjured, and how many credulous females may lament his inconſtancy? His behaviour ſhews the wanton cruelty of his heart. 'Twas barbarous to keep up the deception. If he repented his vows to you, if he judged your fortune inſufficient for his purpoſes, if lucrative motives allured him into the gilded ſnare, *honour* would have prompted him to a perfect confidence in you. He ought to have been unreſerved. Perhaps you might then have blamed his inconſtancy, but you muſt have applauded his ſincerity. He knew the tenderneſs of your heart, for that fatal tenderneſs excited his hopes of ſucceſs. Do not deſpond, my dear girl, for the loſs of ſuch a man. You are happier in his deſertion, than if I had immediately beſtowed your hand, where you had given your heart. We ſuffer more frequently from the diſappointment of our imaginary ſchemes of happi-

neſs,

nefs, than from the depriuation of real bleſſings. As to *evils* (though we are too apt to conſider pains and diſappointments as ſuch) they never can be inflicted by a gracious providence; for "it is good for "us to be in trouble, that we may learn "our duty." Vice alone, is the occaſion of real misfortunes. As to the information you propoſe on Miſs D——'s account, I think from *ſome* accounts I have heard of that lady's diſpoſition, ſhe would only laugh at your ſimplicity, and enjoy a conqueſt that gives pain to a rival. I have alſo heard ſhe is of a tender mild nature; but, if this latter character *be* juſt, what could your intimation avail? You could only acquaint her that captain Welmere has violated oaths, which you believed to be ſincere. She would moſt probably truſt to her own ſuperior charms to ſecure his fidelity, and might imagine his addreſs to you, had been rather a conſequence of your

diſcovered fondneſs than the reſult of his real inclination; an opinion he would attempt to inſpire or confirm.—You ought not to encourage a wiſh of recalling captain Welmore's heart. He may be in diſtreſsful circumſtances from which your fortune cannot extricate him. You owe to him your life; let gratitude then enliven your generoſity to give him a proof of diſintereſted regard. He cannot deſert Miſs D——, without ruining all his aſpiring hopes. You may rekindle his paſſion for you, but he may remain dead to honour. The thought I know alarms you.—Do not deſtroy her happineſs, which, if ſhe truly loves, muſt depend on his feeling a reciprocal affection. Reflect how wretched the leaſt coolneſs muſt render her, who, as his wife, will be entitled to his tendereſt regard. Love eaſily diſtinguiſhes, and cannot be ſatisfied with an enforced tenderneſs. Could you, in this lady's ſituation,

ſupport

ſupport without diſtraction the certainty that the man you loved, the man united to you by divine and human ties, was induced by gratitude and humanity only, to aſſume a ſuperficial tenderneſs? Could you be contented even with his eſteem, when another woman poſſeſſed that preference due to you?—Act with reſolution, my dear girl, and you will find your duty and peace of mind are inſeparable. You now conſider the captain as under a prior engagement to you, and encourage hopes deſtructive to your eaſe. When he is actually the huſband of another, you will ſhudder on the conſciouſneſs that he is ſtill beloved by you, and accuſe yourſelf of a crime. Make then a glorious effort, and I'll be anſwerable for its ſucceſs. Heaven will aſſiſt your perſeverance.—Write immediately, my dear Flavia, for you have raiſed an anxious impatience in the breaſt of

Your tenderly affectionate mother,

SOPHIA VILLARS.

LETTER XLII.

Miss VILLARS to Mrs. VILLARS.

MY doom is now irrecoverably fixed, and my future lot muſt be miſery! Oh! my deareſt mother, captain Welmore was married yeſterday. Your kind letter came at a time when I could only attend to my own ſad reflections. I have read it this afternoon, and find my heart ſomewhat relieved by it. I will not diſturb his happineſs, nor attempt to deſtroy his *lady's* peace. I will ſubmit to my fate; but I can never more expect to be happy. They have left town, and are retired to the ſeat of an honourable relation above thirty miles diſtant, till a grand houſe they have taken is fitted for their reception. Lady Egerton, Mrs. Stamforth, and even her worthy huſband, intereſt themſelves in my uneaſineſs. I cannot diſguiſe it. My

heart

heart was ſo oppreſt yeſterday I could not ſhed a tear. Oh! gracious heaven, what did I feel while lady Egerton gently diſcloſed to me the fatal marriage? Let me return to you, deareſt madam. I am unfit for company. The town is diſagreeable to me.—Mankind are my averſion.—I will never marry.—My faithleſs lover has taught me to deſpiſe the whole ſex. I feel ſome conſolation in determining to paſs my life in retirement with you. Alas! Why did I venture into this gay trifling world? Why did I admit a gueſt into my heart, who has robbed me of my tranquillity? Cruel ſex! Ill-fated tenderneſs! I ſometimes wiſh for the inſenſibility of the lively coquettes, who accept the promiſcuous addreſſes of the fop and man of ſenſe; but duty and reaſon make me perceive the ſuperiority of the deceived to the deceiver. Oh! Madam, ſuſpence was painful, but this certainty is ſhocking.

But it was my own imprudence that has involved me in these dreadful circumstances. I see, I *feel* it. Yes, madam, I am convinced, though too late, of my error. I can conquer my present ill-requited tenderness; but I can never change its object. I know your goodness will not attempt to alter my determination. You will acquiesce in it. My kind friends cannot render town any longer agreeable. Tell me when I shall return to you. I feel a pleasing emotion at the thought of seeing you; for I am no less

Your dutiful and affectionate,
than afflicted daughter,
FLAVIA VILLARS.

LETTER XLIII.

Mrs. VILLARS to Miss VILLARS.

MY DEAR GIRL,

I FLATTER myself you will be much more tranquil at the time you receive this letter, than when you dictated your last. Your trial has been severe, but remember, my Flavia, your love was not augmented by frequent interviews with the beloved object. You saw him only twice (I believe) after he declared himself your lover. Think what aggravated distress you would have suffered, if you had received for many months incessant assurances of tenderness; acknowledge, my dear, the superior severity of this fate, and acquiesce in the dispensations of providence. You wish to return into the country. I shall soon be with you, and shall find my own gratification in complying with your request.

The

The latter end of next week, my mother ſets out for town, and I ſhall accompany her. Make yourſelf eaſy, my dear girl, and give your kind friends the pleaſure of ſeeing the ſucceſs of their endeavours to diſſipate your uneaſineſs. Why ſhould you abſent yourſelf from company? I intreat that you will attend lady Egerton and Mrs. Stamford in their viſits, and to the diverſions. You ought not to contract a gloomy habit. If, for your own ſake, you will not try to be chearful, I beg you will for mine, that the ſight of your diſcontent may not diſturb my peace of mind.

You will never marry, you ſay. What ſhould induce you to form ſuch a reſolution? Will you cheriſh the remembrance of an ungrateful man, to the entire excluſion of real merit? Shall the tenderneſs of ſuch an heart be extinguiſhed by an unrewarded paſſion? You *can* conquer your love,

love, you add. What ſhould then prevent you from changing its object? You are diſengaged from your promiſe. He is no longer unmarried, nor your lover. Congratulate yourſelf, or rather acknowledge it an effect of divine mercy, that you have recovered your liberty. Fatal have been the effects, my child, of raſhly-plighted vows. Never enter into any engagement, but ſuch as religion ſanctifies, prudence dictates, and human laws authorize. Vehement profeſſions of eternal conſtancy, and ſolemn proteſtations againſt a future choice, ſhew more the fervor of the preſent attachment, than they become a ſecurity againſt a change of ſentiment. Should the heart revolt from a conviction that it had encouraged an improper biaſs, what muſt be the conſequence? Either the completion of an engagement deſtructive to duty and to peace, or the relinquiſhment of a plighted vow. Thus you ſee a

crime

crime is probably the result of a precipitate promise. With what accumulated guilt then, will that inconstant heart be fraught, that has called heaven to be a witness of *repeated* perjuries? He, who has accustomed himself to deceit, must be guilty even in *fixing* his choice. There have been many engagements contracted, which it would have been criminal to have fulfilled, and where there was less guilt in retracting a rash promise, than in hazarding the violation of essential duties; but we should never render ourselves liable to the necessity of chusing a lesser, to avoid a greater evil.

You, my dear, are capable of adorning the connubial state, and of exalting the maternal character. Such amiable qualities ought to be displayed in their proper sphere. Your's was a rash *romantic* resolution. We are too much accustomed to call remarkable instances of goodness *romantic*,

mantic, only because they are *unusual*; but, this constancy which you would preserve, this determined perpetual celibacy in consequence of a disappointment, is the virtue only of romance, and has no place amongst the duties of real life. In romance, it is usual for persons to be captivated at first sight: a dangerous susceptibility, and generally ill-founded. We feel ourselves pleased with externals, and immediately grant the admired object those qualities, which frequently exist only in our own imaginations. We should be careful not to *fix* our *affections*, 'till we are convinced we ought to grant our *esteem*.

There are many who *fancy* themselves to be in love from some doubtful symptoms; and even on this *supposition* it is natural to fluctuate between hope and fear, whilst ignorant of the sentiments of the object of their attention. Several have been

been insensibly drawn into a *real* liking, by the officious, ill-judged representations of their friends. Captain Welmore might only *fancy* himself in love. Perhaps he might mistake for love the grateful emotions of your heart, or he might perceive that gratitude had excited a tenderer passion, and in such case it is thought an indispensable point of honour in all his profession, to avow a love they seldom feel. Your delicacy is shocked, lest you should have betrayed any signs of affection before this solicitation. A young woman cannot too carefully guard her heart against approaches of love; nor, if she *has* insensibly cherished a tender regard, can she with too much vigilance attempt to subdue it, for there is scarcely a possibility that an indulged affection can escape the eye of a penetrating observer. It has been said by an ingenious and noble writer,

"A maid,

"A maid, unask'd, may own a well-plac'd
"flame;
"Not loving *first*, but loving *wrong* is
"shame."

But to *whom* could she consistently with virgin delicacy, own even a well-placed flame? Not surely to the object of it, who has expressed no reciprocal tenderness. If to feel love for an amiable man, cannot be imputed to a woman as a breach of female modesty; yet to reveal it, may be deemed a breach of that part of virtue which is termed prudence, and will probably be destructive of her happiness.

You, my dear child, were enslaved by gratitude. You might be *pleased* with captain Welmore's appearance and address, but I cannot think he would have gained your love, if he had not engaged your gratitude. Your passion then was founded on motives of generosity. *You* condemn the effect of your love, and I will be silent.

You

You have my pity and affection. Entitle yourſelf, my Flavia, to my eſteem.

Farewel, my beloved daughter. I hope to ſee you wear a face of chearfulneſs, and to congratulate you on the poſſeſſion of an undiſturbed heart.

I am, my dear,

Your ever affectionate mother,

SOPHIA VILLARS.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.